

Arabs offered EU role as incentive

LONDON (AP) — Germany wants to tempt recalcitrant Arab states to the peace table with an offer of associate membership in the European Union (EU), a newspaper on Friday quoted Israeli Prime Minister Shimon Peres as saying. Mr. Peres told the Jewish Chronicle he liked the idea, which he said was proposed to him by German Chancellor Helmut Kohl. "The Middle East may meet together under European auspices, because we live in a world where markets are more important than countries," Mr. Peres was quoted as saying during a visit to Britain last week. Associate membership would be attractive to Syria and Lebanon — the only two countries bordering Israel that have not signed peace treaties — because it would ease access to the lucrative European markets. Syria and Israel are to resume peace negotiations in Washington later this month, but participants do not expect an early breakthrough. Germany, which is the European Union's largest and richest member, has the clout to push through the proposal.

Jordan Times

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Turkey: Syria, Iran dithering on arms find

ANKARA (R) — Turkish officials have accused neighbours Syria and Iran of dodging questions about their possible role in a seized arms cache that Turkey says was bound for Kurdish rebels. Anatolian news agency said on Friday. Damascus has not answered a Turkish request for information about the haul, six long-distance trucks packed with weapons, which officials in Ankara say was seized in Turkey on the way from Iran to Lebanon's Syrian-controlled Bekaa Valley. Iran is trying to avoid the issue by just saying it is investigating and wants to cooperate with Turkey. "Anatolian quoted unnamed foreign ministry officials as saying, Turkish Interior Minister Teoman Unusan last month accused Syria of a role in the arms cache, saying it was further proof of Syrian support for the Kurdish Labour Party (PKK) guerrillas' separatist campaign in southeast Turkey. Mr. Unusan said the weapons, including anti-aircraft guns and more than 1,600 mortar bombs, were seized on or near Turkey's border with Syria last month.

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King performs prayers at Ali Sido mosque

AMMAN (Petra) — His Majesty King Hussein joined worshippers at Ali Sido Mosque and listened to Friday sermons, which focused on the conquest of Mecca, which took place on Ramadan 21, A.D. 8, almost fourteen centuries ago, when Muslim armies, headed by the Prophet Mohammad, conquered Mecca without shedding blood. Attending the prayer with King Hussein were His Royal Highnesses Prince Abdullah and Prince Faisal. Prime Minister Abdul Karim Al Kabarti, the speakers of the Upper and Lower Houses of Parliament, Ahmad Al Lawzi and Sa'd Hayel Srour, Royal Court Chief Awn Khasawneh, several ministers, the King's advisors, Minister of Awqaf and Islamic Affairs Abdul Salam Al Abbadi and senior civil and military officials.

IMF grants \$300m credit to Jordan

AMMAN (J.T.) — The International Monetary Fund (IMF) said Friday it had approved nearly \$300 million in credit for Jordan to help the Kingdom implement its economic reform programme. In a statement to the Jordan Times, the IMF said the credits, worth 200.8 million special drawing rights, equivalent to \$295 million, in extended fund facility (which supports medium-term economic programme that seek to overcome structural balance of payment problems), will be available to Jordan in three years (1996-98).

Israel rebuffs Amnesty calls

TEL AVIV (AFP) — Israel on Friday rejected a call from Amnesty International for talks on the fate of prisoners held in the notorious Khiam jail in Israeli-occupied southern Lebanon, the defence ministry said. Deputy Defence Minister Ori Orr "categorically rejected" the request from the rights group's secretary general, Piery Sane, at a meeting in the ministry in Tel Aviv. Mr. Orr said the prison was under "exclusive control" of Israel's proxy militia, the South Lebanon Army, according to a ministry statement. Mr. Orr also refused an amnesty request to release all Palestinian prisoners held on "administrative detention, under which they can be held without trial for renewable six-month periods." The release of prisoners is part of the talks between the Palestinian Authority and the Israeli government, he said.

Kaddoumi in Cairo

CAIRO (AP) — A leading Palestinian Liberation Organisation (PLO) official arrived in Cairo Friday for talks with President Hosni Mubarak and Foreign Minister Amr Musa on negotiations between the Palestinians and Israel. Farouk Kaddoumi is known as an opponent of 1993 Israel-PLO accord. He arrived from Iraq, where he said there were high hopes that talks with the United Nations would lead to an agreement allowing Iraq to sell a limited amount of oil to buy food.

Ali Mahdi loyalists defect to back Aided

MOGADISHU (AFP) — A group of politicians from Somali warlord Ali Mahdi Mohammad's faction have defected to join the self-styled "government" of his rival Mohammad Farah Aided. General Aided's radio said Friday. Following the defection from Mr. Ali Mahdi's United Somali Congress, dominated by his Abgal clansmen, Gen. Aided nominated four "cabinet ministers" from the Abgal clan and appointed Abdul Rahman Gabow Mohammad, also an Abgal, his fifth deputy president. Gen. Aided, a member of the Habr Gedir clan who controls south Mogadishu, also nominated a "governor of Mogadishu" from the Abgal clan, the radio said.

Iraq-U.N. talks going well, may recess this week

UNITED NATIONS (Agencies) — The first round of talks between the United Nations and Iraq on an oil-for-food plan may end as early as Tuesday, an indication that they are solving technical details quickly, diplomatic sources said on Friday.

"They seem to think they can wrap everything up by Tuesday," one envoy said. The Iraqi team would then consult with Baghdad before another round is scheduled, he added.

The possibility of the talks adjourning a week after they began was made clear to Arab diplomats who spoke to the leader of the Iraqi delegation, Abdul Amir Al Anbari. He said he expected the current technical talks to end by then, the envoys reported.

The talks on Tuesday on practical details of how to implement the plan that might bring Iraqi crude oil back into the market for the first time in five years.

The discussions are based on a Security Council resolution that allows Iraq to see \$2 billion in oil over six months under controlled conditions to buy badly-needed food and medicine. Iraq has been under trade sanctions since shortly after its troops invaded Kuwait in August, 1990.

U.N. spokeswoman Sylvia Foa announced that the talks had adjourned until Monday afternoon after a session on Thursday morning which had focused on "the distribution of medicine and foodstuffs as well as 'other significant matters'."

The issues of oil exports and banking were also raised, she said.

But Iraq's Anbari told

journalists later Thursday that the adjournment meant that working groups would continue examining the nuts-and-bolts issues on Thursday afternoon and on Friday.

He said that the Iraqi and U.N. experts would be matched in the working groups. Each delegation, which has eight members, includes experts from the oil, legal, health and banking sectors.

The United Nations has issued only terse daily statements since the talks started on Tuesday, saying on Wednesday that the first session had been "positive."

Mr. Anbari expressed optimism about the outcome on Tuesday, and said on arrival here Thursday: "I hope we will make progress today."

Ms. Foa told reporters that on Wednesday, the Iraqi delegation had provided details of the situation in Iraq concerning food rationing and the distribution of medicine and health supplies.

The Iraqis are required to present a plan on the "equitable distribution" of aid under Resolution 986, which, until now, they have refused to implement on the ground that the text infringed on its sovereignty.

The Iraqi delegation also presented documents concerning urgent requirements of the Iraqi population for food, medicine, electricity and other related matters, Ms. Foa added.

Resolution 986 allows Iraq to export \$1 billion worth of oil per quarter — or 700,000 barrels according to current prices — under international control to raise money for food and medicine.

Gaza protesters demand PNA try police for killing

GAZA CITY (Agencies) — Thousands of Palestinians rallied in protest against the slaying of two Islamic Jihad activists by Palestinian police last week, threatening civil war unless those responsible are punished.

"If they are not looking for a civil war, they must put the killers of these two people on trial," Nafez Al Zahm, a leader of the Islamic Jihad group, told a crowd of more than 3,000 at a memorial service for the two.

Two suspected militants of Islamic Jihad, Ammar Araj, 21 and Iman Razaneh, 29, were shot by Palestinian police in the Shati refugee camp last Saturday.

Leaders at the memorial rally at the Jabalya refugee camp in Gaza said the two were involved in the January 1995 suicide bombing that killed 21 Israelis and in another attack against Israelis that killed seven in the Gaza Strip last year.

Palestinian National Authority (PNA) has been under pressure to crack down on Islamic Jihad and the larger Hamas or Islamic Resistance Movement, both bent on destroying the peace process. The groups have claimed responsibility for a series of attacks that have killed dozens of Israelis since the peace process began.

"There is no democracy and no law," said Sheikh Abdullah Shami, another Islamic Jihad leader. "This killing will not stop us from continuing our Jihad and our fight to liberate all of Palestine."

Israel Radio said Friday that the PNA offered the families of Araj and Razaneh compensation for the killings, but the families refused.

At a funeral for the two on Sunday, Islamic Jihad leaders warned there would be a

deadly attack in Tel Aviv to avenge their deaths.

The crowd shouted slogans against Palestinian President Yasser Arafat proclaiming "Here is your peace, assassinations and arrests," and chanted "Death to America, death to Israel."

A relative of Razaneh called on Mr. Arafat to "try the killers and let justice take its course."

The Israeli human rights group B'tselem accused the PNA on Friday of having assassinated the two Islamic Jihad members.

"All the witnesses and evidence found at the site confirm that the two men were killed in cold blood and that they had not opened fire," said a Palestinian investigator for the group, Bassam Eid.

"The men did not have the chance to give themselves up," he said. "There were no signs of an explosion in the room where they were hiding."

Palestinian police said the men opened fire first so they replied to defend themselves.

Palestinian prosecutor Khaled Al Qidra said on Thursday that one of the men was killed by bullets and another by a grenade that exploded in his hand, according to autopsy reports.

The secretary-general of the international human rights group Amnesty International, Pierre Sane, urged the PNA on Wednesday to reveal all details surrounding the deaths.

Israeli security forces meanwhile restricted access of Palestinian worshippers to Jerusalem on Friday to prevent confrontations during the Holy Month of Ramadan.

Israeli newspapers said security forces received warnings that Palestinian militants planned to smuggle a car bomb from Palestinian areas into Israel and detonate it.

Jordan, Morocco exchange views on Arab issues, Iraq, Jerusalem and peace

AMMAN (Petra) — His Royal Highness Crown Prince Hassan returned home on Friday after concluding a two-day working visit to Morocco during which he held talks with King Hassan II of Morocco, Crown Prince Mohammed and senior Moroccan officials.

In an arrival statement, Prince Hassan said he conveyed to King Hassan II a verbal message from His Majesty King Hussein dealing with bilateral relations and developments on the Arab and international arenas.

He said he reviewed with the Moroccan monarch efforts exerted to pave the way for holding a dialogue

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King Hassan II of Morocco with His Royal Highness Crown Prince Hassan in Rabat on Friday (Petra photo)

Jordan supports all efforts to end Iraqis' suffering without touching on Iraqi unity

By a Jordan Times Staff Reporter

AMMAN — Jordan supports all efforts aimed at alleviating the suffering of the Iraqi people under the five-year-old international sanctions against their country and is in contact with all parties, particularly Arab countries, to help such endeavours, Information Minister Marwan Muasher said Friday.

Dr. Muasher was replying to a question on comments

made by U.S. Secretary of Defence William Perry Tuesday that the U.S. was cooperating with Jordan and other Middle Eastern countries, which he did not name, to accelerate the demise of Iraqi President Saddam Hussein from power.

The information minister said: "Jordan is supportive of any effort that will help alleviate the suffering of the Iraqi people in a framework that would respect the ter-

ritorial integrity and sovereignty of Iraq and help ensure the rights and freedoms of the people of Iraq."

"In this regard, Jordan is in contact with all countries, particularly the Arab countries," the minister added.

Mr. Perry, in a speech before the Washington Institute for Foreign Policy on Tuesday, said: "I think there are things which we and Jordan and other nations in the region can do to accelerate the demise of the present regime

in Iraq. We are already cooperating in some actions."

The defence secretary did not give details of the purported actions.

When pressed for a direct comment on Mr. Perry's assertions, Dr. Muasher would only say that "Jordan's policy vis-a-vis Iraq has not changed" and that the Kingdom fully respected the unity, territorial integrity and

(Continued on page 7)

Peres boosts opinion poll lead over rival

TEL AVIV (Agencies) — Prime Minister Shimon Peres left his right-wing rivals trailing in the opinion polls on Friday, despite an opposition decision to join forces as early elections loom in Israel.

Mr. Peres' main rival, Likud leader Benjamin Netanyahu, is still at least 10 points behind the prime minister after striking a pact with the smaller right-wing Tsomet Party.

A Gallup poll published Friday said Mr. Peres was in line to win 52 per cent of the vote, enough to ensure him a sweeping first-round victory over Mr. Netanyahu, with 30 per cent, as long as a third centre-right candidate, David Levy, runs in the poll.

Likud and Tsomet, headed by Rafel Eitan, initiated an agreement Thursday to run a joint slate of candidates in a

bid to cut the lead enjoyed by Mr. Peres and Labour since the November assassination of former Premier Yitzhak Rabin.

"This is a revolution in Israeli politics," Mr. Netanyahu said. "The right is no longer divided and is gathering its forces to win the election."

But as well as the Gallup poll, published in the daily Maariv, a second survey in Yediot Aharonot newspaper gave Mr. Peres 53 per cent of the vote and Mr. Netanyahu 43 per cent in a head-to-head.

Election fever is already sweeping Israel ahead of an announcement by Mr. Peres next week on whether he will call snap polls. Labour officials say the elections are certain to be brought forward

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100 injured in huge London blast after IRA ends truce

DUBLIN (Agencies) — A 17-month old ceasefire in the Irish Republican Army's (IRA) war on Britain was reported to be over on Friday night and shortly afterwards a huge explosion hit the Docklands area of London that injured at least 100 people.

Ireland's semi-state RTE radio and television network said it had received a statement from the IRA announcing "with reluctance" the end to a truce called in September 1994.

The statement, the authenticity of which could not immediately be confirmed, said the truce would end at 1800 GMT.

The blast in the East End of the British capital came soon afterwards. A Scotland Yard spokeswoman said it had been caused by a "device."

Police said around 100 peo-

ple were hurt in the blast, two or three of them seriously.

Metropolitan police said the "walking wounded" included a five-year-old girl with facial injuries.

Ken Pratt, a Reuters employee who was at a restaurant in the area, said there had been an "almighty blast" which had blown out windows nearby.

Witnesses reported large numbers of emergency vehicles around the Canary Wharf Tower, one of Europe's tallest office buildings which houses the offices of several banks and national newspapers.

Residents in the area reported feeling the shock at 1901 GMT and hearing the explosion.

Witnesses said virtually every window in the area had been broken.

In a statement delivered to news organisations in Dublin, accompanied by a "recognised code word," RTE said, the IRA announced that its ceasefire was at an end.

The statement said the IRA announced "with great reluctance" that the "complete cessation of military operations will end at 6 o'clock."

The IRA's Sinn Fein political wing was unable to confirm the statement.

Sinn Fein, the IRA's political wing, said it was checking the reports but was unable to confirm that an historic truce which ushered in an unprecedented period of peace was over.

"We know nothing about it," said a senior Sinn Fein official reached by telephone in the Northern Ireland capital, Belfast.

Some IAF deputies upset over decision not to join government

By Sa'eda Kilani
Special to the Jordan Times

AMMAN — Some Islamic Action Front (IAF) members of Parliament are furious over their leadership's decision not to participate in the government of Abdul Karim Al Kabarti.

Deputy Theib Abdullah (Amman) said IAF leaders were taking "unilateral decisions" without consultations with the front's executive bureau or with IAF deputies in Parliament. He said he will resign in protest.

IAF sources denied Dr. Abdullah's allegations and said they had no basis.

"The leadership was mistaken," insisted Deputy Abdullah, who is also an IAF executive bureau member.

"We heard about the meeting (between the front's leaders and Mr. Kabarti last week) from the street. They should have consulted us before deciding not to participate in the government since (Mr. Kabarti's) government is different than the previous ones."

"I will not attend the front's regular meetings,"

Dr. Theib declared. "There are some members who are expected to join me because they are not also satisfied with the leadership's performance."

Other IAF deputies who were cited by Dr. Abdullah dissenters said there were internal differences but it did not mean they were planning to defect.

Deputy Ahmad Kasasbeh (Karak) said IAF deputies were "surprised to learn about the meeting and later... the decision not to participate in the government. We should have put the issue for an internal IAF vote since Mr. Kabarti is different from other former prime ministers. What if he (had) made a (good) offer?"

However, "I might be disappointed (in the front's leadership)... but that does not mean I'm going to boycott its meetings or resign," stressed Mr. Kasasbeh.

He said he believed that the differences will be solved internally.

The reasons behind Dr. Abdullah's threats of resignation might be based on considerations other than the

leadership's meeting with the premier, he said.

Anyhow, "we will try to convince him to go back on his decision," he said.

Dr. Abdullah nominated himself for the 1993 parliamentary elections without the IAF's consent. He won and was later lured into joining the front's 16-member bloc in Parliament.

IAF Secretary General Ishak Farhan could not be reached on Friday. But sources close to the IAF leadership described the differences as "routine" and said potential dissensions did not pose any threat to the front.

"They are, creating all of this hue and cry just because they could not become ministers," one source said. "The leadership is authorised to talk on behalf of the front whenever something urgent comes up. They cannot tell the premier to wait before forming his Cabinet until they consult with all IAF members."

The source added that the front held a meeting with the front's leading members one

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Sudan issues warrants for 3 fugitive suspects

KHARTOUM (Agencies) — In an apparent attempt to show cooperation with the U.N. Security Council, Sudan on Friday issued arrest warrants for three Egyptians suspected of taking part in an assassination attempt on Egyptian President Hosni Mubarak to surrender within a week.

The Security Council approved a resolution Jan. 31 giving Sudan 60 days to hand over the three suspects to Ethiopia.

The men, identified as Hussein Ahmad Sheet Ali, Mustafa Hamza and Mohammad Ezzat reportedly fled to Sudan after taking part in the attempt on Mr. Mubarak's life in Ethiopia on June 26.

The request by Sudan's prosecutor general said that after Ethiopia's investigation, the men "were believed to have crossed the border into Sudan." It was not clear, however, whether the Sudanese government was acknowledging the men were in Sudan.

Sudan has long maintained it does not know their whereabouts.

"I hereby order you to

surrender to the nearest police station in a period not exceeding a week as of today," the prosecutor said in a statement carried by Sudan's official news agency.

He called on the public to help authorities in arresting the three men and provided details on several aliases they use.

He also listed the three's passport numbers, age, description and false names they have used in the past.

Hamza, convicted twice to death in absentia in Egypt, is accused by Cairo of being a top leader of the Gamaa Al Islamiyah, the group which claimed the attack on Mr. Mubarak and has led a violent campaign to topple the Egyptian government.

Ali, 32, is a former engineering student at the University of Assiut in southern Egypt, the prosecutor general said, citing information from the Ethiopian authorities.

Ali is known to have used several aliases including Faisal Abdul Latif, described as an engineer holding a forged Sudanese passport, and Sirraj Mohammad Hussein.

هنا نحن اتصل

Afghan groups discuss post-Rabbani regime

ISLAMABAD (AFP) — Several top Afghan leaders held talks here Friday to hammer out a solution for the establishment of a broad-based government in Afghanistan, Pakistani and Afghan sources said.

Former Afghan President Sibghatullah Mojaddedi met with Uzbek General Abdul Rashid Dostum, who flew into Islamabad Tuesday, they said.

Gen. Dostum, who commands considerable influence in several provinces in northern Afghanistan, also met with Ustad Mohaqiq, vice-president of the pro-Shiite faction Hezb-e-Wahdat, and Sadeq Modabbari of Harkat-e-Islami, the sources said.

The Uzbek general on Thursday discussed the Afghan situation with Pakistani government leaders and senior foreign officials.

Official Pakistani sources here did not rule out the possibility of representatives of the Taliban militia joining the talks among the key rivals of embattled Afghan President Burhanuddin Rabbani, who remains in power in Kabul despite his two-year tenure ending in December 1994.

Diplomatic activity to resolve the Afghan conflict

stepped up Thursday as Iranian Deputy Foreign Minister Aledin Borujerdi arrived in Islamabad for talks with Pakistani officials and U.N. special envoy on Afghanistan Mahmoud Mesri.

Mr. Mesri also went to the eastern Afghan city of Jalalabad to discuss peace prospects with former Premier Gulbuddin Hekmatyar.

Afghan sources said that Mr. Hekmatyar, who heads a faction of Hezb-e-Islami, was also expected in Islamabad Saturday to join the intra-Afghan dialogue aimed at ending the nearly four-year Afghan civil war.

The Taliban militia, besieging the Afghan capital Kabul for the past four months, wants to topple Mr. Rabbani and enforce Islamic law in the war-torn country.

Gen. Dostum's National Islamic Movement and Mr. Hekmatyar's Hezb-e-Islami along with Shiite Hezb-e-Wahdat and Mr. Mojaddedi's National Liberation Front are grouped in a four-party opposition, coalition, which also demands Mr. Rabbani's resignation to pave the way for transfer of power in Kabul.

Mr. Mojaddedi Thursday told Pakistani television that Mr. Rabbani was "not sincere" in transferring power.

Mr. Rabbani says he will step down but he never said to whom he would transfer the power, Mr. Mojaddedi observed.

He said there would be no vacuum if the Afghan president declared that "I have resigned." It would end the war as Rabbani rivals were already controlling 90 per cent of the country.

The United States said Thursday it will press Pakistan's foreign minister to push for peace in Afghanistan, a U.S. official said Friday, while Pakistan is believed to support the Taliban faction.

"We have for quite some time been trying to promote a resolution by working through the United Nations," said an official, speaking on background.

But he added that the Pakistani government, which has shifted its alliances with various factions in Afghanistan over the years, has not wholeheartedly engaged in the effort to bring about a negotiated settlement.

"They are not as enthusiastic as we are," he said.

Pakistani Foreign Minister Asif Ahmad Ali was scheduled to meet with Deputy Secretary of State Strobe Talbott and with Energy Secretary Hazel O'Leary.

Gazan doctor seeks healthy democracy

By Sami Aboudi
Reuters

GAZA — History has repeated itself for a highly respected Palestinian leader.

Nearly 34 years after he was elected to a token Palestinian legislative assembly under Egyptian rule, Haider Abdul Shafi won a seat on an 88-member Palestinian council in elections in the West Bank and Gaza Strip on Jan. 20.

In both the 1962 and 1996 polls, Dr. Abdul Shafi, now 76, captured the largest number of votes in Gaza. He did not campaign in either election.

"I am known in Gaza because of my work as a doctor and I became more known after I headed the Palestinian delegation to the (1991 Middle East) peace talks," Dr. Abdul Shafi said at his Gaza City home. "I did not need to make any effort to let people know more about me."

An outspoken critic of the 1993 Israeli-Palestine Liberation Organisation (PLO) peace deal which set the framework for self-rule in the West Bank and Gaza, Dr. Abdul Shafi is nevertheless a strong advocate of working through the system to bring about change.

He will be the oldest member of the Palestinian council, which will help Palestinian President Yasser Arafat run both areas until Israel and the PLO agree on their final status.

Under Palestinian law, Dr. Abdul Shafi will chair the first council meeting at the old white-domed legislative assembly building, where he once served as



Haider Abdul Shafi

president of the first Palestinian parliament in the Egyptian-run Gaza Strip.

The building, at the heart of Gaza City's main Omar Al Mukhtar Street, was erected by Egypt's President Gamal Abdul Nasser in 1958. It has been refurbished to house the Palestinian council.

Dr. Abdul Shafi stands out in Gaza as a tireless nationalist with an undented reputation for honesty.

"He is known to be a man of integrity and credibility. People trust him and believe he can stand up to wrongdoing," said Abla Al Jamal, an office clerk in Gaza.

Dr. Abdul Shafi believes that the Palestinian council will be able to build on the Israel-PLO peace deal to bring about an independent Palestinian state.

"We want an indepen-

dent Palestinian state and deviation from this path is a deviation that I would not accept," he told Reuters at his home after his election.

Dr. Abdul Shafi's name has been known in the Middle East since 1964, when he served on the first PLO Executive Committee.

He gained international recognition as chief Palestinian negotiator with Israel between 1991 and 1993.

While deeply committed to peace with Israel, Dr. Abdul Shafi earned a reputation for standing his ground during the talks in Washington.

His colleagues often remarked on his style of walking out of the negotiating room whenever the Israeli side proposed something he would not accept.

Although tagged a Marxist in conservative Muslim Gaza, Dr. Abdul Shafi won 58,000 votes in last month's election, more than any of the 12 candidates chosen to represent the largest Palestinian district.

Dr. Abdul Shafi said his top priority as a council member would be to "insist on democratic practice in all bodies of the Palestinian Authority."

He said he would not hesitate to challenge Mr. Arafat on the performance of the new administration.

"The council has the right to query every minister and the president on everything. This is not just mere talk. This will become a reality through the basic law which will be legislated," Dr. Abdul Shafi said.

Farrakhan says U.S. Muslims back Sudan

KHARTOUM (R) — U.S. black radical Louis Farrakhan was quoted on Friday as saying American Muslims backed Sudan against "unjust plots."

"More than 40 million American Muslims stand with Sudan against the unjust plots that it is subjected to," the government-owned Sudan Al Hadith quoted Mr. Farrakhan, who heads the Nation of Islam movement, as saying.

Mr. Farrakhan met Sudanese President Omar Hassan Al Bashir, and spiritual leader Hassan Al Toubi during a five-hour visit to Khartoum. He also called on Muslims throughout the world to confront "Western attempts" against Islam.

Sudan maintains a U.N. Security Council resolution approved this week is a plot hatched against it by Egypt and Ethiopia.

Foreign Minister Ali Osman Mohammad Taha said the resolution, which demands Sudan extradite to

Addis Ababa three men suspected of trying to kill Egyptian President Hosni Mubarak last year, was a plan to impose sanctions on Sudan.

The paper also quoted Mr. Toubi, Sudan's Islamist patron, as saying Mr. Farrakhan's visit at a time when the United States is withdrawing its diplomats from Khartoum for security reasons shows that the American people are behind the Sudanese.

Mr. Farrakhan, who has been criticised for past attacks on Jews and whites, mobilised hundreds of thousands of black men for a peaceful rally in Washington in October aimed at promoting black self-reliance and responsibility.

In Lagos, the Campaign for Democracy (CD), an umbrella for human rights groups in Nigeria, has strongly criticised a week-long visit by Mr. Farrakhan, describing his pronouncements as "repulsive."

Israel frees Iraq 'spy'

TEL AVIV (AFP) — Israel has set free a Palestinian jailed five years ago for plotting targets for Iraq's Scud missile attacks against the Jewish state during the 1991 Gulf war.

Omar Subhi, from Beit Safafa village near East Jerusalem, was released this week after the authorities reduced his nine-year jail sentence because of health reasons.

Mr. Subhi was arrested in January 1991 after the first of 39 Scud missile attacks against Israel.

He told the daily Maariv that he was recruited by Iraq's military attaché to Jordan in 1989. "He asked me to show him potential military targets and I pointed them out to him on satellite photographs," Mr. Subhi said.

He said he picked out Tador factories, Israel's main military and civilian electronics manufacturer, as well as Israeli Military Industries at Lod, Israeli Aeronautical Industries at Ramleh and a factory making jet engines at Beit Shemesh.

The Sphinx to get a facelift

CAIRO (AFP) — The Sphinx is getting a facelift to repair 4,500 years of damage, but its doctors say the famed monument will never leave the emergency ward.

"Restorations will never be completed. The Sphinx is the world's oldest patient and we must always be at its bedside," Zahi Hawass, head of antiquities for the Giza plateau where the Sphinx is located, told AFP.

Workers are busy chiseling away a layer of cement which smothered large parts of the ancient wonder which has the body of a lion and a human head.

"The rock is alive and the cement keeps the Sphinx from breathing. You feel like it's trying to get rid of it," Mr. Hawass said.

"Since the work done between 1925 and 1936 by the French Emile Barazise, all restorations have used cement sometimes up to three metres deep," he said.

Experts were alerted to the danger of the cement in 1988, when a block dropped off the Sphinx's right shoulder, seven years after a piece of masonry protecting the rear right paw fell off.

Masonry placed between 1982 and 1987 immediately

began crumbling "perhaps because of humidity from the main body, as if the Sphinx were rejecting this unwelcome cover," Mr. Hawass said.

Antiquity authorities have now abandoned cement in restorations, replacing it with stone modelled as faithfully as possible to the original.

To guide them, engineers have on hand in their workshop albums of all the photos of the Sphinx.

On the walls of the shed are plastered maps of the various restorations made to the monument since the Pharaonic era.

In Somaliland, a new state rises from the ruins of civil war

HARGEISA, Somaliland (R) — The self-declared Republic of Somaliland and its one million people, struggling to build a state from chaos, are gaining foreign respect for their resurrection efforts.

Shunned by foreign governments which have withheld any recognition since its founding in 1991, Somaliland's fledgling government is gradually impressing international aid agencies and businessmen as the rest of Somalia plunges deeper into anarchy.

"This is a hidden success story in the conundrum which is Somalia," said a foreign aid official in the capital, tucked into a wide valley in the

largely barren northwest of the Horn of Africa.

"There is a government and it is trying to govern. There are policemen on the streets and even an army. They are trying to pull themselves up and slowly, everything is improving."

He was speaking in a walled aid agency compound in Hargeisa surrounded by a sea of destruction dating from 1988 when then-President Mohammad Siad Barre's warplanes and artillery pounded the city for three months, sending all its residents fleeing.

A city of more than 200,000 people was reduced to rubble for challenging Siad Barre's rule, which ended in 1991. Well over half of

Hargeisa remains empty ruins picked over only by goats.

Unlike other internationally renowned battle zones such as Beirut and Somalia's capital Mogadishu where large parts escaped any war damage, hardly a single building in Hargeisa was untouched.

Some areas of this dusty city which now function have only come back to life since refugees began trickling back in 1991.

But Hargeisa's troubles were not over. In November 1994 clan militiamen based at the city's airport, invaded, sending 80,000 residents fleeing a second time. The gunmen were repulsed by

government forces but their rebellion sputters on.

"For the whole country the major problem is lack of peace," said Resettlement and Reconstruction Minister Mohammad Barood Ali.

"All the people won't come back until there is peace."

The U.N. Refugee Agency estimates 600,000 refugees from Somaliland remain outside despite a rapid increase in returnees in the past year bringing the total population to 1.1 million.

Mr. Ali, imprisoned by the Barre government for eight years, said negotiation is the only way to end the revolt by the Habr Yunis and Aidagala sub-clan militias which attack every few weeks but

suffered a heavy defeat this month in the town of Burao.

"They know they cannot defeat the government militarily. What they are doing however is blackmailing us. As long as they are fighting we cannot have peace and Somalis who are scattered throughout the world will not come back to help reconstruct."

Aid officials agree the government is strong enough to survive largely because of revenues from livestock exports from Somaliland's port of Berbera, 160 kilometres northeast of Hargeisa.

Unlike most ministers who bemoan the lack of recognition, Mr. Ali stressed Somalilanders must first recognise

themselves and build a nation and the government must decentralise its power.

"International recognition will come, once we get our own house in order," agreed Hargeisa Mayor Mohammad Hashi Elmi. "But we must wait for it. We have to help ourselves fast."

Dominating Somaliland is President Mohammad Ibrahim Egal, a 65-year-old former prime minister of Somalia elected by elders in 1993 to replace Abdul Rahman Tur, a Habr Yunis leader who has sided with south Mogadishu faction chief Mohammad Farah Aideed.

Mr. Egal said the rebels will be crushed unless they negotiate peace.

NEWS IN BRIEF

Israel, U.S. test anti-missile laser beam

TEL AVIV (R) — A new joint U.S.-Israeli weapon system that uses laser beams to intercept and destroy short-range missiles was tested in the United States recently, Israeli officials said on Friday. They said the U.S. army and the Israeli defence ministry developed the technology together and tested it in New Mexico recently. Israeli defence ministry media adviser Avi Benayahu told Reuters: "The ministry defence establishment is glad about the success of the Nautilus project in the United States and says this is an impressive technological achievement." But Mr. Benayahu stressed the project was in initial stages and "a long way from completion. Israeli newspapers said the technology would be effective against Katyusha rockets, a favoured weapon of guerrillas fighting Israel in South Lebanon. Mr. Benayahu refused to give details of the test. Israel's Yedioth Ahronoth daily newspaper said in the test the laser system succeeded in hitting an unarmed Katyusha missile.

Militants kill 3 in attack on Egyptian church

MINYA (AFP) — Militants killed three people and wounded two others when they attacked a Christian church in south Egypt, police said Friday. Fuad Malik Hanna, 45, and Tony Abdul Baqi Ahmad, 38, were shot dead when three gunmen opened fire as they stood guard at the Coptic Christian cathedral in Abu Qurqas village, 250 kilometres south of Cairo, late Thursday. Youssef Fawzi Zaria, 25, a lawyer who happened to be at the scene of the attack, was also slain, police said. The militants also seriously wounded a third church guard and another civilian before escaping. The deaths brought to 951 the number killed since Muslim militants began their violent campaign to topple the government in March 1992.

Sudanese president's brother killed

KHARTOUM (AFP) — The youngest brother of Sudanese President Omar Al-Bashir has been killed while fighting against southern rebels in the country's bloody civil war, the daily Al Engaz Al Watani reported on Friday. The paper said Osman Al Bashir was slain "after a lengthy jihad against the enemies of the nation in the south," without specifying where or when he was killed. Osman began fighting in the south in 1991 and "had devoted his life to spreading the faith," the paper said. Sudan has been torn apart for more than 12 years by the civil war between the Christian and animist south and the mostly Muslim north.

More Japanese troops to join U.N. forces

DAMASCUS (R) — A second batch of Japanese troops arrived in Damascus on Thursday to join U.N. peacekeepers on duty in the Golan Heights acting as a buffer between Syrian and Israeli forces. The 29 soldiers will join 16 other Japanese troops who arrived here eight days ago. The new arrivals were welcomed at the airport by representatives of the United Nations and the Syrian government. The 45 Japanese soldiers will formally replace Canadian troops in the U.N. Disengagement Observer Force (UNDOF) whose assignment expires by the end of February. UNDOF was formed in compliance with a U.S.-brokered deal signed by Syria and Israel in Geneva in May 1974 following the 1973 Middle East war.

Rushdie named author of the year

LONDON (AFP) — Salman Rushdie was Thursday awarded the 1995 Author of the Year Award at Britain's most prestigious book awards ceremony for his much acclaimed novel "The Moor's Last Sign." He was presented with the prize — for his first novel since "The Satanic Verses," which earned him an Iranian death edict seven years ago — at the seventh annual British Book Awards, dubbed the "Oscars" of the book world. Mr. Rushdie won from a shortlist including Pat Barker, who snatched the 1995 Booker Prize from him with "The Ghost Road" when Mr. Rushdie was hot favourite. The award against Mr. Rushdie was issued by Ayatollah Ruhollah Khomeini in 1989 for what was called blasphemy of Islam in his book "The Satanic Verses. Also shortlisted for Wednesday's award were the British writers Martin Amis, Louis de Bernieres, and Minette Walters. Mr. Rushdie follows in the footsteps of Sebastian Faulks, who was 1994 author of the year with his book "Birdsong," which has sold half a million copies. The Book of the Year, one of the most hotly contested awards, was given to "Delia Smith's Winter Collection," a cookery book which has sold 1.7 million copies since publication last October. Wilbur Smith was awarded the Award for Lifetime Achievement for a career spanning 21 years during which he has sold 100 million copies of his novels.

18 Syrians jailed for illegal entry to Cyprus

LARNACA (AFP) — A court here Thursday jailed 18 Syrians who entered the eastern Mediterranean island illegally for three to 15 months, the official agency CNA reported. The heaviest sentence was imposed on the owner of the boat, Belal Shaeg, which brought the 17 other men to the island. "The courts have a duty to impose harsh sentences in order to control the problem," warned Judge Phivos Zomenides, stressing that the number of illegal immigrants was taking on "wide dimensions."

Moroccan floods kill 25, destroy homes

RABAT (R) — Recent flooding in Morocco killed 25 people, destroyed 7,200 homes and flooded more than 130,000 hectares of agricultural land, the government said on Friday. Damage to infrastructure was estimated at more than 460 million dirhams (\$55 million) with roads, bridges, electricity and telephone lines damaged. Interior Minister Driss Bassi said in a statement that more than 8,000 sheep and cows were also lost in the flooding, which followed three weeks of heavy rain in coastal areas.

JORDAN TELEVISION	
Tel: 77311-19	
PROGRAMME TWO	
14:00	Movino (cartoon)
14:30	Whiz Kid (cartoon)
15:00	Harry and the Hendersons
15:25	Blue Heelers
16:00	Drama — Okavango
17:00	Doe — Carre Vert
17:30	Series — Les Compagnons de l'Adventure
18:00	Series — Chateaux Valtour
19:00	News in French
19:15	Magazine — Faut Pas Rêver
19:30	News Headlines
19:35	Major Dad
20:00	Doe — The Stamp of Greco-Roman
20:15	Drama — Hawaii Five-0
21:10	Drama — A Fine Romance (Ep. 1)
22:00	News in English
22:25	Doe — A Journey Across the Land of Islam
22:45	Feature film: "In a Stranger's Hand"
23:50	Mancuso FBI
PRAYER TIMES	
05:00	Fajr
06:19	(Sunrise) Dhuhr
11:50	Dhuhr
14:53	'Asr

CHURCHES	
17:20	Maghreb
18:39	'Isha
CHURCHES	
St. Mary of Nazareth Church	Swadli, Tel. 810740
Assembly of God Church, Tel.	632785
St. Joseph Church Tel. 624500	Church of the Annunciation Tel. 637440
De la Salle Church Tel. 661757	Terranova Church Tel. 623366
Church of the Annunciation Tel.	623541
Anglican Church Tel. 652626	Armenian Catholic Church Tel. 771331
Armenian Orthodox Church Tel.	775261
St. Ephraim Church Tel. 771751	Armenian International Church Tel. 625226
Evangelical Lutheran Church Tel.	624328
German-speaking Evangelical Congregation Tel. 645457	The Latter-Day Saints Tel. 654932
Church of Nazareth Tel. 675441	The Evangelical Local Church in Amman Tel. 811295
WEATHER	
Bulletin supplied by the Department of Meteorology.	
Temperatures are expected to	

JORDAN TIMES DAILY GUIDE AND CALENDAR

drop significantly with rain falling in the northern parts of the Kingdom and gradually extending to all other regions. Skies will be cloudy to partly cloudy and winds south-westerly active.

In Aqaba, mild weather conditions will prevail, skies cloudy to partly cloudy, winds southerly moderate to active, and seas rough.

Min./Max. temp.

Amman	4/11
Aqaba	11/21
Dead Sea	4/13
Jordan Valley	10/20

Yesterday's high temperatures:

Amman 15, Aqaba 20 Humidity readings: Amman 29 per cent, Aqaba 16 per cent.

USEFUL TELEPHONE NUMBERS

NIGHT DUTY

AMMAN:

Dr. Afif Shukri	898863
Dr. Salman Dabouhi	776751
Dr. Osama Hussein	847249
Dr. Hisham Kan'an	791246
Firas pharmacy	661912
Fardous pharmacy	778336
Al Asma pharmacy	637655
Kanoun pharmacy	626722
Al Salam pharmacy	636730
Yacoub pharmacy	644945

Shmehani pharmacy 637661
Najib pharmacy 847632

IBRID:

Dr. Ahmad Oatu	281741
Alquds pharmacy	(—)

ZARQA:

Dr. Salah Safarini	987565
Khalifeh pharmacy	985417

Radio Jordan 774111
Water Authority 841001
Jordan Electricity Authority 815615
Electric Power Company 636381
RJ Flight Information 06-53200
Queen Alia Int'l. Airport 06-53200

HOSPITALS

AMMAN:

Hussein Medical Centre	81381/302
Khalidi Maternity, J. Amn.	642816

Aklieh Maternity, J. Amn. 64241/2

Jabal Amman Maternity	62562
Malhas, Amman	63640
Palestine, Shmeisani	607071
Shmeisani Hospital	669131
University Hospital	845845
Al-Musharraf Hospital	6672279
The Islamic, Abadi	66612757
Al-Ahli, Abadi	641646
Irbid, Al-Muhajirin	777101/3
Al-Bashir, J. Ashrafieh	775111/26
Army, Marja	891611/15
Queen Alia Hospital	81224050
Amal Hospital	874155
The Arab Centre for Heart and Special Surgery	865199

ZARQA:

Zarqa Govt. Hospital	(09)983323
Zarqa National Hospital	(09)983323

Ibn Sina Hospital (09)986732
Al Hikma Modern Hospital (09)986732

IRRID:

Princess Beata Hospital	(02)755555
Greek Catholic Hospital	(02)72255
Al Nafes Hospital	(02)47100

AQABA:

Princess Haya Hospital	(03)314111
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FOR THE TRAVELLER

QUEEN ALIA INTERNATIONAL AIRPORT

This information is supplied by Royal Jordanian (RJ) information department at the Queen Alia International Airport Tel. (06)53200. S. where it should always be verified.

ARRIVALS

Royal Jordanian (RJ) Flights (Terminal 1)

05:15	..... Jakarta, Singapore (RJ)
09:00	..... Damascus (RJ)
09:50	..... New Delhi (RJ)
09:55	..... Karachi, Dubai (RJ)
10:05	..... Beirut (RJ)
14:45	..... New York, Amsterdam (RJ)
16:30	..... Cairo (RJ)
17:55	..... Jeddah (add) (RJ)
19:00	..... London, Berlin (RJ)
23:25	..... Vienna (RJ)

Jakarta, Abu Dhabi (add) (RJ)

Other Flights (Terminal 2)	
12:40	Muscat, Abu Dhabi (GP)
14:20	Muscat, Abu Dhabi (GP)
15:00	Rome (AZ)
18:15	Vienna (OS)
20:10	Dubai (EK)
20:40	Paris, Damascus (AF)
22:05	Larnaca (CY)
22:35	Cairo (MS)
22:45	Athens, Beirut (OA)
23:25	Amsterdam (KL)
01:15	London, Damascus (BA)
DEPARTURES	
Royal Jordanian (RJ) Flights (Terminal 1)	
06:25	Beirut (RJ)
11:00	Amman (RJ)
11:30	Amsterdam, New York (RJ)
12:30	Jeddah (add) (RJ)
11:45	Madrid, Geneva (RJ)
11:50	Paris, Brussels (RJ)
12:05	London (RJ)
12:15	Cairo (RJ)
12:45	Riyadh, Dhahran (RJ)
20:10	Amman, Dubai (RJ)
20:15	Bahrain, Dubai (RJ)
21:00	Ahu Dhabi, Dubai (RJ)
01:00	Jeddah (add) (RJ)
03:00	Jordan (RJ)
Other Flights (Terminal 2)	
07:45	Beirut



Her Majesty Queen Noor Thursday chats with a little girl during a ceremony honouring former directors of the Jerash Women's Charitable Society (JWCS). On the occasion of the JWCS silver jubilee anniversary, Queen Noor also presented certificates to 24 graduates of the society's sewing training course, a Royal Court statement said. The Queen, who toured the JWCS' Traditional Handicrafts Centre praised the society's training programmes which have benefited more than 120 women and their families, said the statement. The Noor Al Hussein Foundation's Jordan Design and Trade Centre has been working closely with this centre since 1989 to assist it in technical and management training, product development and both local and international marketing, the statement said. Queen Noor, accompanied by her advisor In'am Mufit, was received by Governor of Jerash Abdul Ghani Abdullah, Director of JWCS Inayah Khalil and NIF Executive Director Ibrahim Badran, according to the statement (photo by Crystal).

Patient of first elbow joint implant in Jordan in 'good condition'

AMMAN (J.T.) — Ismail Ghazal, an orthopaedic surgeon, performed the first elbow joint implant in Jordan last week, which is considered to be a rare operation worldwide. The patient is Chechen whose elbow was shattered in the war in Chechnya. The implant is called an osteochrom (an alloy including titanium, which makes the prosthesis lightweight, and a high density polyethylene). The implant used by Dr. Ghazal was manufactured by Depuy, an international medical supply company with an agency in Jordan. According to Dr. Ghazal, the cost of the surgery in Jordan is JD 3,000-3,500, which includes the price of medication, and an average hospital stay of about one week. The expense of an elbow implant in England, he said, is approximately £15,000-18,000. The patient, who underwent the surgery at the Arab Centre for Heart and Special Surgery in Amman is said to be recuperating well.

King, Queen meet U.S. Senate delegation

AMMAN (Petra) — Their Majesties King Hussein and Queen Noor Thursday met with a three-member U.S. Senate delegation, headed by Senator Claiborne Pell, and their wives.

The King stressed that Jordan and Israel have gone beyond the peace-making process to the peace-building process, saying that Jordan's peace achievement is an example to be emulated in the region.

The King voiced his concern over the suffering of the Iraqi people, and stressed the need to enable them to exercise their rights in security, freedom and decent living.

King Hussein described Jordan's relations with the Arab countries of the Gulf as very good, noting that it is going to be crowned within the next few days by his visit to Saudi Arabia. The delegation members expressed their appreciation to King Hussein's efforts to achieve a just and lasting peace in the Middle East to enable its people to live a decent life and reap fruits of peace and cooperation.

The delegation includes Claiborne Pell, a Democrat from Rhode Island and member of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee, Senator James M. Inhofe, a Republican from Oklahoma and member of the Senate Armed Services Committee, and Senator Charles Robb, a Democrat from Virginia and a member of the Senate Armed Services Committee.

JBA lawyer denies he was asked to drop case against association

By Lola Keilani
Special to the Jordan Times

AMMAN — Khalaf Masadeh, a defeated presidential candidate in the 1995 Jordanian Bar Association (JBA) elections, denied Friday that Minister of Justice Abdul Karim Dughmi asked him to drop the case contesting the validity of the association's 1995 elections.

Mr. Masadeh stressed that the meeting which took place between the minister and himself Thursday was merely a courtesy visit. He added that it was too early

to comment on the issue especially that he has to consult with the 120 lawyers who filed a suit in the case against the association, and whom he represents, but added that he did not reject the idea of dropping the case.

"During the next week I will meet with my clients and discuss the issue with them," he said.

Mr. Masadeh, himself intends to run for the JBA March presidency by-election, which were called for since JBA President Kamal Nasser was appointed Minister of Social Development

last week. According to JBA Vice President Zaid Khasawneh, who also intends to run for the JBA by-election, Mr. Dughmi did ask Mr. Masadeh to drop the case, and he believed that Mr. Masadeh would consider this step.

Following the JBA 1995 April elections, the Ministry of Justice filed its own case against the association, challenging the validity of the elections because of the participation of lawyers from the West Bank. At that time, then Minister of Justice Hisham Tal had

instructed the JBA to strike all West Bank members from the association's roster and to prohibit them from participating in the 1995 elections as the Kingdom had severed all legal ties with the West Bank in 1988.

Minister of Justice Dughmi announced on Thursday that the ministry has dropped the case.

The Higher Court of Justice will rule on Feb. 27 if Mr. Masadeh does not drop the case.

3 parties sign charter pledging merger

By Ghafiah Alul
Special to the Jordan Times

AMMAN — In a bid to enhance cooperation in dealing with the national, international and regional issues, three centrist political parties Wednesday signed a step further last week by signing a basic charter to merge the three parties.

"This was the first step which will lead to uniting our parties," said Ali Al Sa'ed, secretary general of the Progress and Justice Party (PJP).

The charter which pledged a merger between the PJP, the Popular Unity Party (PUP) and the Jordanian Arab Popular Party (JAPP), was geared towards protecting the national interest, Mr. Sa'ed added.

"We speak one language, and we do not allow any party to control the other," said Mr. Sa'ed who will

chair the unified leadership of the three parties.

The charter, signed Wednesday, said the three parties decided to forge ahead with the merger in light of the developments witnessed in the Kingdom.

These developments require strenuous efforts to better serve the country, enhance the channels of dialogue and the freedom of thought and expression as well as pluralism which will leave a positive impact on the democratic process, the charter states.

It stipulates that the three parties will cooperate in dealing with national, regional and international issues. They will also enhance their relationship with the government in order to consolidate the democratic process, raise public awareness as well as guarantee the national interest within constitutional channels, according to

the charter. "The parties will accept or reject the government's decisions depending on the nature of these decisions."

During the signing ceremony, Talaat Ramahi, secretary general of the PUP, explained that the parties do not call for a change in the constitutional monarchy, rather the parties are guardians of the Constitution.

"We are calling for political pluralism where we will have the opportunity to participate in the decision making process," said Mr. Ramahi.

Mr. Ramahi who believed that the merger of the three parties will achieve success, dismissed accusations that his party's decision to join was financial.

"Money matters never occurred to us as all political parties have financial problems," he said.

Asked why a leader for the three parties was not elected by all party members, Mr. Sa'ed said that he believed that a leader should have been elected, but the merging parties were going through a transitional period.

He told journalists at the signing of the charter that the leadership will coordinate with the Jordan National Front, another merger of parties which brought together the Jordan National Alliance (JNP), Renaissance Party (Al Yaqatha) and Homeland Party (Al Watan).

The three parties to Wednesday's merger plan said they have no differences in the basic principles among them and that they will exert efforts in order to fight corruption, favouritism and bribery.

Health official says 9 new AIDS, HIV cases reported in 1995

By Tareq Ayyoub
Special to the Jordan Times

AMMAN — The number of Jordanians and foreigners with Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome (AIDS) and Human Immunodeficiency Virus (HIV) increased last year to 126 cases up from 117 cases in 1994, while the total number of people who have died of AIDS since cases were first reported in the Kingdom is 39, a senior Ministry of Health official said Friday.

The official said two of the deaths occurred in 1995.

Preferring anonymity, the official said that of the 126 cases 84 have HIV, 39 have AIDS and three cases have not been identified.

He said 22 cases were infected in Jordan, 94 were infected while they were outside the Kingdom, and the sources of infection of the remaining 10 cases were not known.

"With the help of the World Health Organisation (WHO), the Ministry of Health formed a committee of Jordanian physicians, headed by Muneeb Ayyoub of Al Basheer Hospital to supervise the diagnosis and

treatment of AIDS and HIV patients," the official said.

He added that the committee, which maintains strict confidentiality concerning the patients, prefers "home treatment" to treatment in government-run hospitals. He said the only medicine available in Jordan to treat AIDS patients is the U.S.-manufactured drug called Retrovir Zido Vidine.

"The reaction of patients' families differs from one to another," the official said. Some families refuse to cooperate with us and even expel the patient from

home. Some are afraid to approach the patient, and only in a few cases we find families who understand the issue and cooperate with us," he said.

The first AIDS case in Jordan was discovered in 1986, according to the ministry. The patient was a Jordanian who was infected during a visit to a "neighbouring country," said the official. Any foreigner discovered to have the virus would be expelled from the Kingdom immediately, the official added.

According to ministry statistics the period

between 1991-92 witnessed the discovery of more AIDS cases because of the influx of large numbers of refugees and returnees to Jordan during the Gulf crisis. In 1995, nine cases were discovered in the country down from 20 in 1994, the ministry said.

Most AIDS cases in the country, said the official, were contracted through blood transfusions. He said all blood donations by citizens and residents are now analysed at the National Blood Bank. Last year, he said, at least 400,000 blood units were tested for AIDS

and HIV. He said Jordan does not import blood.

When a case of HIV or AIDS is discovered, he said, the Ministry of Health conducts further tests to make sure that the patient actually is infected. Tests are then conducted on those persons who come in close contact with the patient (spouses, children), said the official. The authorities make inquiries to determine the source of contact, he said. Instructions are given to the family and those persons in close contact with the patient to enable the patient to lead a normal life

without suffering any social discrimination or isolation, the official said.

"We prefer to deal with the patient in a very secret way because of the social stigma attached to AIDS and HIV patients," the official said.

According to WHO instructions, if a school-aged child proves to have the virus, his/her case should be treated with "strict confidentiality" to ensure that the school does not become aware of his case to avoid any possible mistreatment or isolation of the child.

WHAT'S GOING ON

CONCERT

* Violin recital by Czech virtuoso Václav Hudeček and pianist Petr Adamec on Sunday at the Royal Cultural Centre at 8:00 p.m.

PLAY

* "Ramadan Supermarket" (in Arabic) at the Royal Cultural Centre at 8:00 p.m.

KARAK CULTURAL DAY

* Cultural day by Karak Cultural Directorate at the Royal Cultural Centre (including a concert at 9:00 p.m., poetry at 8:00 p.m., and an art exhibition all day long).

EXHIBITIONS

* Engravings by French artists at the French Cultural Centre (until Feb. 29).

* Printmaking and paintings by Jordanian artist Yasser Dweik at Darat Al Fununh (until Feb. 18).

Sri Lanka seeks foreign help, vows to crush Tamil Tigers

COLOMBO (AFP) — Sri Lanka's President Chandrika Kumaratunga called Friday for international help to fight Tamil Tiger rebels as a senior minister vowed to mount pressure on the separatist guerrillas.

Mrs. Kumaratunga told parliament that she expected foreign governments to crack down on offices of the separatist Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE) in their capitals.

"I hope foreign governments will take concerted collective action against the LTTE," Mrs. Kumaratunga said. "It will be a tremendous boost to my government's political attempts to resolve the ethnic problem."

She said the Tamil Tigers were using their offices abroad to organise fund raising activities, unleash anti-Sri Lanka propaganda offensives and plot terrorist strikes at home.

It was the first time Mrs. Kumaratunga has joined the

chorus of Sri Lankan politicians urging the international action against the LTTE which has offices in about 40 countries, including Britain, France and the United States.

This week, Foreign Minister Lakshman Kadirgamar made a similar request after the LTTE bombing of the main Colombo financial centre that killed 87 people and wounded 1,400.

Mr. Kadirgamar told parliament Friday the Tigers were collecting money abroad to buy anti-aircraft missiles. At least six out of the seven air force planes which crashed since April are believed to have been shot down.

Colombo has repeatedly called for the closing down of LTTE offices abroad but the separatist organisation has not yet been banned by the government here.

Deputy Defence Minister Anuruddha Ratwatte said the LTTE carried out last

week's bombing, the biggest suicide attack in the country, because of military setbacks inflicted by the army in the north of the country.

"These dastardly actions are clearly intended to provoke the other communities to harass the innocent Tamil citizens and cause damage to the country's economy," Gen. Ratwatte said.

He said the government will step up pressure against the Tigers.

The LTTE is leading a violent campaign for independence in the island's northern and eastern regions and more than 50,000 people have died in the bitter 23-year-old conflict.

Amid fears of rebel attacks, Mrs. Kumaratunga drove to parliament, located on a lake island just outside the city, after police cordoned off several key highways and blocked traffic, holding up thousands of office workers.

Mrs. Kumaratunga's address was, however, marred by an opposition boycott in protest at tight security measures in parliament for the ceremonial opening of the sessions for the new year.

Mrs. Kumaratunga asked the opposition to join her People's Alliance (PA) to face the protracted ethnic conflict that has plagued the country for several decades.

"The nation expects us all, in government and in the opposition to rise above narrow, individual concerns and act with responsibility and wisdom in resolving the problems, that are almost too gigantic for a small nation like ours," she said.

The opposition United National Party (UNP) said its MP's boycotted parliament because the new security plan under which MP's were to be bussed to the assembly was unacceptable.



Sri Lankan President Chandrika Kumaratunga is escorted to parliament by Speaker K.B. Ratnayake (left) Friday as she arrives for the ceremonial opening of parliament in Colombo. The main opposition United National Party boycotted the opening, claiming a government ban on vehicles in the parliamentary complex negated their MPs' right to free movement (Reuters photo)

Republicans scramble for top three places in U.S. campaign

CRESTON, Iowa (R) — Republican candidates Thursday bombarded the airwaves with nasty messages and stumped in Iowa's snowy towns as the campaign for the first major test of the 1996 U.S. presidential campaign entered its frantic final five days.

Iowa Republicans vote in 2,142 local party caucus meetings next Monday to start the process of picking their presidential nominee to face President Bill Clinton in November. Many analysts say anyone finishing out of the top three in the nine-man race could effectively be out of the race.

Polls show Senate Republican leader Bob Dole leading, with millionaire publisher Steve Forbes in second place and many voters still undecided. Three candidates are seen having the best chances for that crucial third place: conservative commentator Pat Buchanan, former Tennessee Governor Lamar Alexander and Texas Senator Phil Gramm.

Iowa University pollster Arthur Miller said his data suggested Sen. Dole seemed to have stopped his slide and had consolidated his lead in recent days. Mr. Forbes also was holding steady in second place.

But Sen. Gramm's support seemed to be collapsing in Iowa while Mr. Buchanan and Mr. Alexander were moving up to challenge for third place, Mr. Miller said.

Mr. Buchanan's bid was spurred by his upset victory over Sen. Gramm Tuesday in a presidential caucus in Louisiana, which was boycotted by six of the nine candidates including Sen. Dole, Mr. Forbes and Mr. Alexander.

Mr. Buchanan was in typically feisty mood as his campaign swept through the picturesque town of Creston in southern Iowa. A blunt-spoken commentator, Mr. Buchanan is bidding for the votes of Christian conservatives who make up a large proportion of the state's Republican faithful.

"Many of those undecided voters are probably not Bob Dole supporters," Mr. Buchanan said. "They've known Bob Dole for 20, 30 years. I think they were waiting for a conservative to emerge in this race."

"We've got one candidate in this race — one strong, unabashed, unapologetic con-

servative who can win the nomination," he said.

Mr. Buchanan's other main theme is opposition to free trade agreements which he says are destroying American jobs. He said he had passed through two towns Thursday where factories had recently closed, sending jobs to Mexico and Asia.

Sen. Gramm was setting a punishing pace for himself in eastern Iowa where he had scheduled six appearances in different towns. He said Wednesday his campaign would be dead unless he placed in the top three.

After Iowa the campaign battlefield shifts to New Hampshire, which stages its first in-the-nation primary on Feb. 20. Sen. Dole was campaigning in New Hampshire Thursday.

The campaign in both Iowa and New Hampshire has been dominated by an unprecedented wave of television advertising, much of it negative. Many of the ads came from Mr. Forbes, who is financing his campaign out of his \$450 million private fortune and has already spent in excess of \$20 million.

Mr. Forbes has attacked Sen. Dole for raising taxes, wasting public money and opposing term limits for members of Congress. Sen. Dole is attacking Mr. Forbes for wanting to end social security for retired people, opposing a balanced budget amendment and seeking to eliminate tax deductions for home owners.

Mr. Forbes also attacked Sen. Gramm and Mr. Alexander. Mr. Alexander said that if Mr. Forbes' father Malcolm, founder of the family's publishing empire, had known how his son would spend his inherited fortune he might have put restrictions in his will.

Indiana Senator Richard Lugar, who is struggling in the polls, Thursday unveiled his own advertisement attacking everyone else's negative spots.

"We have gone over the edge," he said. "The sheer volume, the money, the venom, the distortions...it's being done with such glee, with abandon, with more money than ever before."

Premier designate optimistic on early government for Italy

ROME (AFP) — Italy's Prime Minister Designate Antonio Maccanico sounded bullish Thursday, saying he is "out of the woods" in his search for what analysts predict will be high-powered reforming government to include three internationally popular former premiers.

Mr. Maccanico is anxious to get Italian political life moving again after almost a month of near-paralysis since Premier Lamberto Dini resigned. Italy currently holds the rotating six-month presidency of the European Union and wants to be seen as a viable partner of the 15-nation grouping.

Part of the hold-up is over proposed far-reaching constitutional reforms to give Italy more stable politics in the future.

The chief architects of the accord to end the immediate crisis thrashed out new ideas Thursday for Mr. Maccanico's administration to introduce a radically new French-style system greatly increasing the powers of Italy's president.

Mr. Maccanico was bullish Thursday, saying he now was "out of the woods" in his exhausting negotiations. Pundits predict a cabinet list will be announced this weekend or Monday.

They believe it will include the three previous prime ministers, Azeglio Campi, Giuliano Amato and Lamberto Dini, who are widely perceived domestically and internationally to be the three best heads of government Italy has had in 20 years.

Mr. Maccanico was appointed premier-designate after the left and right reached tentative agreement on changing the constitution in line with Mr. Maccanico's proposals. He wants to strengthen the powers of the head of state in a modified version of the French system, giving a directly-elected president the power to form a government from a parliamentary majority.

But the initial left-right agreement on this concept was vague and required detailed work.

The powerful right-wing

alliance led by former Premier Silvio Berlusconi drafted a document Thursday pressing for a French-style system but insisting it must be adapted to the Italian parliamentary tradition.

Part of the problem has been that the centre-left is particularly anxious to preserve Italy's traditionally strong post-war parliament, fearing overly strong executive powers.

The left leader Massimo D'Alema says Italy should adopt a presidential system which gives parliament the last word, and he has proposed a German-style chancellor as the model rather than a French-style president.

The most doubtful participant in the left-right accord on reforms is Mr. Berlusconi's chief ally, the extreme right-wing Gianfranco Fini of the formerly neo-fascist National Alliance.

But Mr. Berlusconi, anxious for Mr. Maccanico to get on with leading an effective government, has been pressuring Mr. Fini heavily.

Violence hits Dhaka over opposition leader's death

DHAKA (R) — Bangladesh's main opposition leader Sheikh Hasina Friday branded Prime Minister Begum Khaleda Zia's government as a "terrorist regime" after four people had been killed in growing strife over Feb. 15 elections.

"Khaleda Zia is leading a terrorist regime. People are being killed by terrorists despite deployment of the army," Mrs. Hasina said after an emotional visit to the home of Haji Abdul Aham, a leader of her Awami League, shot dead Thursday.

"Khaleda Zia and her terrorist activists are responsible," Mrs. Hasina told Reuters.

She alleged the government had violated the constitution and human rights by imposing a ban on planned opposition rallies and a march to Mrs. Khaleda's office in Dhaka Saturday.

But she vowed the march would go ahead.

Mrs. Hasina insisted there would be no election on Feb. 15. "There will be no voter participation. This is not an election at all. But they (government) can announce the results anyway," she said.

"We are not ready to take part in any election under a corrupt government. The whole nation...have boycotted the election," she said as Awami supporters chanted "answer blood with blood".

Hundreds of mourners then attacked police with stones and bombs. Police responded with teargas and arrested several protesters. Witnesses said several people were injured.

Alim was shot near his home in Dhaka's Lalbagh area while returning from a mosque Thursday evening. As the news spread, his followers went on a rampage, damaging nearly 50 cars and setting shanty houses on fire. They attacked the Lalbagh home of retired Lieutenant-General Mir Shaukat Ali, a minister and leader of the ruling Bangladesh Nationalist Party (BNP).

Fighting broke out again when police tried to stop nearly 10,000 opposition activists parading Alim's body during the funeral. "There was a heavy exchange of fire and sporadic blasts of teargas canisters. Nearly 100 people have been injured," one witness said.

Three people were killed in northern Bangladesh ahead of a planned visit to the region by the prime minister who is campaigning for Feb. 14 polls, police said Friday.

Haiti's new president faces huge task

PORT-AU-PRINCE, Haiti (R) — With inauguration celebrations over, Haiti's President Rene Preval began the serious job of trying to rebuild his impoverished country's shattered economy.

"I think he's got a very difficult job," said William O'Neill, a legal expert at the National Coalition for Haitian Rights in New York. "He doesn't have a lot of time. Some kind of improvement has to be visible and widespread so that people feel there is progress made."

Political analysts say naming a cabinet, defining economic policy and streamlining Haiti's bloated government bureaucracy will require Mr. Preval's immediate action. Haiti has operated without a budget since November, when pro-business Prime Minister Smark Michel resigned over the issue of economic reforms needed to secure millions of dollars in badly needed aid from international lending agencies.

Mr. Preval has said he will have to decide right away between laying off about 14,000 federal workers or accepting the terms of a lending agency economic reform package that includes the privatisation of nine state-owned industries.

His first act of government Thursday was to meet a delegation of Haitians living in the United States. The estimated \$300 mil-

lion expatriates send home each year is the largest component of the nation's economy.

In his inaugural address Wednesday, Mr. Preval called on all sectors of Haitian society to support the nation's fragile democracy and help rebuild its economy.

Mr. Preval, who was prime minister in President Jean-Bertrand Aristide's government that was ousted by a coup in 1991, had a low profile before December's election, when he won 88 per cent of the vote. Mr. Aristide was banned by the constitution from serving consecutive terms.

One of Mr. Preval's main challenges will be to win over Haiti's poor masses, who saw Mr. Aristide as a hero because of his battle against the country's dictators.

Mr. Aristide was restored to power 15 months ago by U.S.-led troops after three years in exile after the military coup. Since his return, international troops have patrolled the streets and aid has poured in but Haiti remains the western hemisphere's poorest nation.

Political analysts say Mr. Preval cannot count on a honeymoon with voters, who want him to produce tangible results soon. "I hope that Preval will be able to do everything that Aristide couldn't," said student Nathalie Pierre, 19.

Lithuanian premier sacked after crisis

VILNIUS (R) — The prime minister of the Baltic state of Lithuania was forced from office Thursday after a clash with the country's president over a national banking crisis.

Parliament overwhelmingly backed a decree signed by President Algirdas Brazauskas dismissing reformist Prime Minister Adolfas Slezevicius over his handling of the bank problems.

The small country of just 3.7 million people was rocked in December by the closure of two of its top banks, Innovation Bank and Litimpeks.

The crisis further increased the dislike of many Lithuanians for Mr. Slezevicius, who despite his credentials as a former Communist, pursued a path of market-oriented economic reforms during his three years in office.

Mr. Brazauskas was also angered by revelations that Mr. Slezevicius withdrew his personal savings from Innovation just two days before it closed.

A total of 94 deputies out of 123 present in the chamber backed the president's decree.

Mr. Slezevicius said he felt insulted at being so summarily dismissed and predicted hard work for the next government.

"We need the strength of all political parties...It is very important that we make an agreement to get us out of this crisis," he told parliament in his farewell speech.

Mr. Brazauskas later appointed local government Minister Mindaugas Laurinas Stankevicius as caretaker prime minister

and kept the present cabinet on until a new government has been formed.

"Tomorrow I will consult with all the leaders of parliament factions...If the talks go smoothly I hope to be able to name a candidate (for premier) on Monday," he told a news conference.

Clear front runners for Mr. Slezevicius's job have not emerged although he is likely to come from the ranks of the ruling party.

The Lithuanian Democratic Labour Party (LDLP) was swept to power in late 1992 as the country reeled from the economic collapse that accompanied independence from the Soviet Union.

To the surprise of many, Mr. Slezevicius followed a policy of reforms to create a Western-style market economy and worked closely with the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and the World Bank.

Western observers say that although Mr. Slezevicius was committed to reform, his efforts were only partially successful.

The country has not attracted as much investment as its fellow Baltic states, Latvia and Estonia.

"In the West there is still the perception that reformed Communists are still Communists and it is a tough image to shake off abroad," said Daina Januta, head of the local U.S. Chamber of Commerce.

Western diplomats have said the change of government should not derail the country's reforms.

"We hope that the reforms maintain the same pace," said one Western financial adviser.

U.S. reviews reported Chinese nuclear sales to Pakistan

WASHINGTON (R) — The United States has said it was reviewing whether China had secretly sold nuclear-weapons technology to Pakistan, but had not decided if it had or how Washington would respond.

"There's been no decision here at the White House related to that," White House spokesman Mike McCurry told reporters.

Asked whether he meant there had been no determination that China had in fact exported the material or that there had been no decision to impose or waive sanctions against China, McCurry replied: "Both."

State Department spokesman Glyn Davies said: "We're reviewing these reported transfers and whether the transfers, if they indeed occurred, would be inconsistent with China's commitments under the non-proliferation treaty or U.S. laws."

"We take the matter seriously," Mr. Davies told reporters.

The two officials were commenting on news reports that the Clinton administration may waive economic sanctions it would be obliged to impose on China for selling equipment related to nuclear weapons to Pakistan.

Reports in several U.S. newspapers said U.S. intelligence had found that China last year sold Pakistan ring magnets for gas cen-

trifuges used to enrich uranium for nuclear weapons.

The Washington Post said the administration was thinking of both imposing and simultaneously waiving sanctions, bowing in part to pressure from U.S. firms doing business in China.

Under legislation approved by Congress in 1994, the president must suspend U.S. export-import bank financing to nations that sell nuclear weapons information and technology. But under the law, the White House can waive the penalties.

Mr. McCurry said \$10 billion worth of economic trade activity that is financed by the Ex-Im Bank would be affected under any imposition of sanctions.

The post said there was a White House meeting about the matter Wednesday, with second-ranking officials from the State, Defence and Commerce Departments attending.

Citing sources familiar with the matter, the post said Undersecretary of State Lynn Davis cabled Secretary of State Warren Christopher in Israel Wednesday to say she supported a simultaneous announcement of sanctions and a waiver.

Fancy a pint of 3,500-year-old beer?

LONDON (R) — An Egyptologist, two scientists and Britain's largest brewer will brew a beer from an ancient Egyptian recipe over 3,500 years old. Tutankhamun ale will be based on sediment from old jars found in a brewery housed inside the Sun Temple of Nefertiti, queen of a pharaoh believed to be Tutankhamun's father. Barry Kemp, an Egyptologist who set off to excavate the temple four years ago, and Dr. Delwen Samuel worked with brewer Scottish And Newcastle to find out how the beer was made. The team has gathered enough of the right raw materials for 1,000 bottles, but most will be reserved for tasting by experts.

Burglars take tea break during robbery

AUCKLAND (R) — a gang of burglars who smashed through five walls to break into and rob a jewellery store were so confident they stopped for a cup of tea halfway through. New Zealand police said Thursday. The thieves got away with New Zealand dollars 300,000 (\$201,600) of watches and jewellery after knocking holes in the walls of five adjoining shops in an Auckland shopping mall. "They made a doorway through the wall which was big enough to walk through with your head bowed. Half-way through it must have been tea time because they stopped and had a cup of tea in one of the shops," a police spokesman said.

Paintings stolen in New York are fakes — FBI

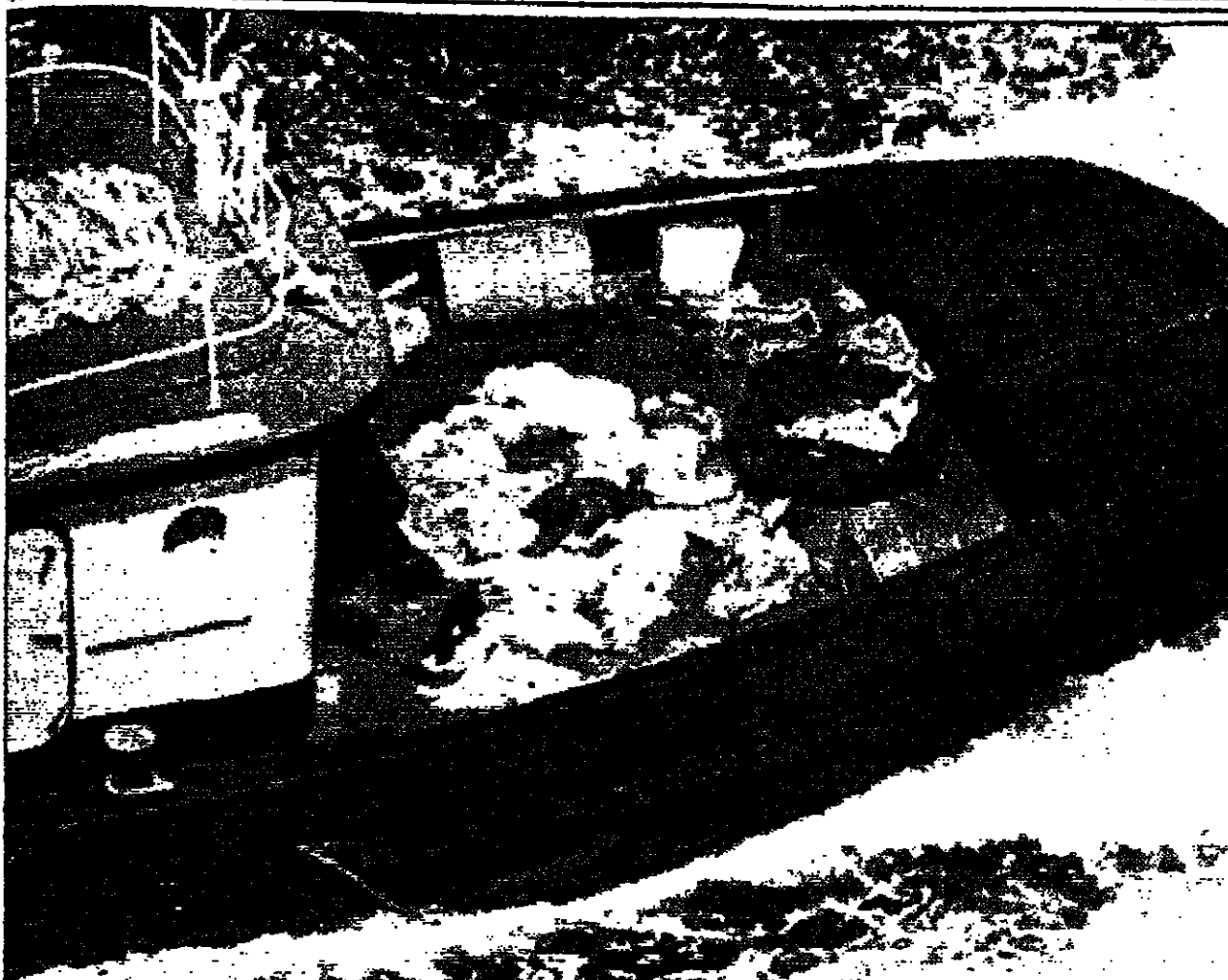
NEW YORK (R) — Three paintings stolen from a New York airport baggage area apparently believed by the owner to be by Picasso and Pissarro and worth \$15 million were found to be fakes, the FBI said Wednesday. FBI spokesman Joe Valiquette said art experts did not give the paintings any value, but two men who were arrested Tuesday and alleged to have stolen them would be arraigned on charges of breaking an interstate shipping statute. The paintings were brought on a flight from Mexico and left with the airline but went missing overnight. The arrested men were a baggage handler and his brother-in-law.

Principal takes live grenade from Delaware student

WILMINGTON, Delaware (R) — An 11th grade student carrying a live hand grenade was disarmed by his principal at a suburban high school in Delaware. Brandywine High School Principal Donald Fantine told Reuters that he took the grenade from the student after calling him to his office to check on a tip the youth had been carrying the device a day earlier. The student's name was not released due to his juvenile status.

Beneficiary of bank error windfall told to repay

COVINGTON, Kentucky (R) — A judge has ruled that an Australian bank's \$800,000 error in favour of a Kentucky lawyer must be repaid to the bank, with interest. Thomas Roberts, a lawyer and accountant from nearby Erlanger, claimed he was due the \$822,507 that was wired transferred to him in October from St. George Ltd, a bank in Sydney, for client Chris Kwan. The bank pleaded in court that it had misplaced the decimal point in the transaction and should have sent Mr. Roberts only \$8,225.07.



Uncovered bodies are shown of victims of a chartered Boeing 757 aircraft crash in Puerto Plata, Dominican Republic as they are brought into port for identification. Officials said they recovered at least 106 bodies (Reuters photo)

Crash experts focus on 757 debris, black box

PUERTO PLATA, Dominican Republic (R) — Aviation crash experts will dig into documents and debris Friday to try to piece together the final moments of a chartered Boeing 757 that crashed into the Atlantic Ocean, killing all 189 people aboard.

The U.S. Coast Guard officially called off the search for survivors and bodies late Thursday and focused its attention on collecting pieces of the downed jetliner that might help investigators learn why the plane crashed moments after takeoff Tuesday about 19 kilometres from this Caribbean resort town.

The U.S. Navy said it launched a high-tech search in 7,000-foot (2,134-metre) deep waters to find the flight data recorder, or "black box," which could tell U.S. and Dominican air safety investigators what happened.

The recorders are located in the tail section of Boeing 757s and emit radio locator signals for up to 30 days.

"I hope that they find something important for us because we need it," said Dominican Air Force Major Emmanuel Souffrant, head of the commission appointed to investigate the crash.

The plane, owned by Turkish charter airline Birgen Air and leased to Atlas Nacionales of the Dominican Republic, vanished from radar screens moments after takeoff. The final words of the captain to air traffic controllers were "stand by."

Most of those on board were German tourists going home after vacation. The Coast Guard called off the search after a second day scanning 1,300 square kilometres of calm ocean waters but finding no additional remains.

Dominican officials said 129 bodies had been recovered. But late Thursday, German Ambassador Edmund Duckwitz told reporters fewer had been found, and said the remains would be moved to Santo Domingo for forensic examination Friday.

As U.S., German and Dominican investigators went about

the task of figuring out what caused the crash, the Pentagon revealed that some of the bodies of the victims floating in the ocean had been robbed by people in small boats.

"The U.S. Coast Guard cutter Jefferson Island reports that many of the bodies recovered have had their identification and money removed by small local boats, who have flocked to the area even before the rescue forces arrived," Navy Captain Mike Doubleday said Thursday in Washington.

U.S. Coast Guard crewmen who flew over the crash site Thursday said there was still a concentrated area of crash debris — including airplane seats, plastic pieces of the passenger cabin, luggage and an oil slick — but it had been carried on ocean currents miles from the crash site.

Authorities conceded they had few clues to the cause of the crash and hoped searchers could find the flight data recorder. Maj. Souffrant said the pieces of the plane recovered so far, including tires, parts of the landing gear and small pieces of fuselage, had yielded few clues.

Investigators from the U.S. National Transportation Safety Board (NTSB), the Federal Aviation Administration and Rolls Royce, makers of the plane's engines, arrived in Puerto Plata to help the Dominican government with the probe. They said they would listen to air traffic control tapes and examine wreckage to try to determine what happened.

"We are taking a lot of time looking at things, reviewing papers and documents," said Jorge Prellezo, an NTSB investigator.

General Hector Roman Torres, director of the Dominican Civil Aviation Agency, said there were no signs of explosive devices in the wreckage of the charter flight examined so far, and that it appeared most likely that human error or a mechanical problem was the cause of the crash.

Cetin Birgen, president of Birgen Air, said in Frankfurt the jet was in perfect technical order when it took off.

N. Korea military halts pleas for aid

TOKYO (R) — North Korea's envoy to the United Nations has said his country will not ask for more food aid because of strong opposition from the country's dominant military, Japan's Kyodo News Agency reported Friday.

U.N. Ambassador Pak Gil Yon told Kyodo that North Korean military leaders had criticised the donors, especially rival South Korea and Japan, for allegedly using the food aid to gain political leverage.

"Japan and South Korea are trying desperately to block humanitarian assistance," Mr. Pak said in reference to Tokyo and Seoul not providing further emergency aid unless Pyongyang shows some readiness to renewing North-South dialogue.

North Korea is suffering from severe floods last year that washed away a substantial part of its rice crop.

While North Korean officials have denied that a famine was threatening its population, it had been seeking food aid from international aid agencies and foreign countries.

Mr. Pak said the military, whose head is Kim Jong-Il, heir to late North Korean President Kim Il-Sung, had been against seeking food aid from foreign countries.

from the beginning, since it did not expect foreign countries to provide it anyway.

"In view of their past (military) experiences, there were attempts from hostile countries and forces to destroy our political system," he said.

Pyeongyang stunned foreign observers last year by breaking with its policy of stubborn self-reliance and asking for foreign aid to feed its population under threat of famine caused by the floods.

The U.N. World Food Programme (WFP) says several million people, including 2.5 million women and children, face possible starvation in a bitterly cold winter.

A WFP official told Reuters this week that North Korean authorities were even allowing peasants to sell food in local markets to cope with the crisis.

On Thursday, North Korea made a rare public expression of thanks to the United States for its decision to donate \$2 billion for the purchase of emergency food.

In a dispatch Thursday from Pyongyang, the official Korean Central News Agency said the U.S. decision was appreciated and helped to remove distrust between the countries.

Pope hails peace in El Salvador

SAN SALVADOR, El Salvador (R) — Pope John Paul Thursday hailed the end of El Salvador's civil war as he made another stop on a tour to promote peace in the long-troubled region.

The Pontiff praised the end of El Salvador's conflict, which cost 75,000 lives and maimed his last visit here in 1983. "I feel a great happiness in witnessing that the weapons of war have been silenced and that the interested parties are interested in implementing the peace accords," he said in his arrival remarks at Hopango Military Base in San Salvador.

Salvadoran President Armando Calderon Sol welcomed the Pope and said his visit in 1983 was instrumental in bringing about peace. "Your call for peace... not only moved us to search for peace but to build a peaceful society based on respect for human rights and guided by truth, liberty and justice," he said.

Salvadorans were eager to greet the Pope and celebrate the country's hard-won peace. More than 100,000 faithful jammed the capital's streets and cheered wildly as the Pontiff passed by riding in his "Popemobile."

Although the war that killed some 75,000 people — mostly Catholic peasants — ended with a 1992 accord, the crackle of discontent still echoes through El Salvador and its church.

U.S. state seeks flood relief

PORTLAND, Ore. (R) — Oregon Governor John Kitzhaber has asked President Bill Clinton to declare a major disaster in his state as a result of the severe storms and flooding that is currently occurring in our state," Mr. Kitzhaber said in a letter to Mr. Clinton released Thursday evening.

Mr. Kitzhaber said state and local authorities could not cope with the floods alone and needed federal help. A federal disaster declaration would make affected areas of Oregon eligible for federal aid.

Seventeen Oregon counties and 12 counties in Washington state have declared local states of emergency because of the floods.

Raging rivers and mud slides have forced thousands to evacuate their homes in western Oregon and have claimed two lives. A third person is missing. Rivers swollen by relentless rain and melting snow continued to rise.

Portland was virtually cut off, with all

major roads into the city closed due to flooding, authorities said. Hundreds of roads were closed throughout Oregon and Washington, including several stretches of Interstate 5, the main north-south artery through both states.

Residents of downtown Portland were anxiously watching the rising Willamette River, at its highest level since a deadly flood of Christmas 1964.

With the river just a few feet below the top of the sea wall, volunteers built an extra one metre barrier of sandbags and plywood. The river was expected to peak at about nine metres Friday morning, about 30 cms above the top of the sea wall.

The river reached 10 metres in the 1964 flood, which left 15 dead and \$145 million in damage.

Witnesses said a wide area of downtown Portland looked like a war zone Thursday evening with sandbags piled up around businesses.

Several homes and one apartment building were swept off their foundations by high water and hand-slides in the Portland area.

Yeltsin gets re-election boost

MOSCOW (R) — Russian President Boris Yeltsin got a boost for re-election from a big centrist party Thursday and said he would make it clear in a week's time whether he will stand for a second term in the June election.

The centre-right bloc Our Home Is Russia, which is led by Prime Minister Viktor Chernomyrdin, said after a leadership meeting Thursday that the movement now had a clear position to support Mr. Yeltsin.

Backing from Our Home Is Russia, though expected, gave the 65-year-old Kremlin leader a boost before his expected announcement next week of his candidacy in the June 16 election.

Mr. Yeltsin was quoted by Itar-Tass news agency as saying he would make a formal declaration of his intentions on Feb. 15 when he visited Yekaterinburg, his home town in the Ural.

But it was clear from his remarks that his visit to his home region was intended to provide him with a backdrop for a triumphant declaration that he was ready for a second term.

"I have decided to announce whether I will stand for a second term not in Moscow, but in Yekaterinburg," TASS quoted Mr. Yeltsin as saying. "It will happen on Feb. 15, as I have promised."

Mr. Yeltsin, plagued by health problems and with his popularity at a low point, acknowledged his biggest election problem will be the 14-month war in rebel Chechnya which has cost dozens of thousands of lives.

The situation in Chechnya has been complicated over the past few days by a big rally in the capital Grozny which has turned into a tense standoff between troops and protesters calling for the withdrawal of Russian forces.

Russian troops Thursday sealed off the pro-independence rally and told demonstrators to disperse.

Mr. Yeltsin, who looks set to announce a new initiative to end the conflict in a State of the Nation address to parliament on Feb. 23, has a clear dilemma.

Public demand to end bloodshed is growing but he cannot withdraw troops from Chechnya without being sure the rebels will not take power there again.

"If we withdraw troops, carnage will start in Chechnya," TASS quoted him as saying. "If we do not remove troops

there is no way of me becoming the president, the people will not elect me. We should find a compromise which would suit everyone."

A planned visit by his biggest supporter in the West, Chancellor Helmut Kohl, who arrives on Feb. 18, also seems timed to render Mr. Yeltsin support for his re-election campaign.

By a quirk, Mr. Yeltsin's arch-foe, Communist leader Gennady Zyuganov, also seems likely to be nominated as the party's candidate for the presidency at a conference on Feb. 15.

Latest opinion polls have set Mr. Zyuganov, whose party occupies a third of the seats in the lower house of parliament after a big success in December's election, well ahead of Mr. Yeltsin.

Other top contenders are ultra-nationalist Vladimir Zhirinovskiy — whose campaign will include a public birthday bash in April — and liberal reformer Grigory Yavlinsky.

The decision by Our Home Is Russia, which is the second biggest faction in parliament, made it the first serious political force to throw its full weight behind Mr. Yeltsin.

"Boris Yeltsin will win victory in these elections," Mr. Chernomyrdin said, according to Interfax. Mr. Chernomyrdin made clear that despite pressure from several support groups he would not stand against Mr. Yeltsin as a presidential candidate.

"As the head of the government I carry out the president's policy of reforms so when (people) support me that means they support the president," he said. "It's logical to address this support directly (to Mr. Yeltsin)."

But Interfax News Agency said not all members of Mr. Chernomyrdin's movement were happy with the decision to back Mr. Yeltsin. Some, underscoring the difficulties ahead of him, told the agency they might walk out of the movement in protest.

Another boost for Mr. Yeltsin came from Strasbourg, France, where the Council of Europe's Committee of Ministers gave a final approval to Russian membership agreed by vote on Jan. 25 and formally invited Moscow to join as its 35th member state.

Blast kills 3 at Chechen independence rally

GROZNY (R) — A blast killed three people and wounded seven in the Chechen capital Grozny Friday during a pro-independence rally, the Interior Ministry in Moscow told Russian news agencies.

Itar-TASS agency said the ministry was treating the explosion, details of which could not be immediately confirmed, as a "provocation aimed at stirring up anti-Russian and anti-government hysteria."

It earlier quoted an unnamed police official saying the authorities would put an end Friday to the six-day demonstration, where tension had already been running high following reports that police had shot and wounded a protester.

"The unsanctioned meeting will be ended today," the official was quoted as saying by TASS.

Interfax News Agency said the blast from an unspecified explosive device occurred at 11.55 a.m. (0855 GMT). The identity of the victims was still being established. It was not clear if they were protesters, police or bystanders.

Supporters of separatist leader Dzhokhar Dudayev have been rallying since Sunday in front of the ruins of Mr. Dudayev's former presidential palace, which was destroyed when Russian troops stormed the Chechen capital a year ago.

Numbering about 2,000 early Friday, they have been calling for the withdrawal of Russian troops and the resignation of Doku Zavgayev's pro-Moscow regional government.

The atmosphere had soured markedly Thursday when the forces sealed off the rally before pulling back late in the day.

Several hundred servicemen, local Omon (special force) units and police again sealed off the rally Friday, stopping people joining it but allowing them to leave. Roads into the city were sealed off. But the crowd seemed to grow all the same.

The city market was virtually empty and protesters heckled the few traders who were at work for not attending the rally.

The protest in Grozny has added to pressure on President Boris Yeltsin, 65, to end the conflict. Doing so could boost his chances of winning a presidential election in June if he runs.

Mr. Yeltsin says he is weighing up several peace initiatives, but has said a military withdrawal would only lead to "carnage".

In Moscow Friday he criticised Boris Nemtsov, the liberal governor of Nizhny Novgorod region, for gathering a million signatures petitioning to end the conflict.

Describing Mr. Nemtsov's move as "populist", he told a meeting of his Presidential Council: "I don't want war. The military, the population, the whole world do not want war."

But he added: "If Nemtsov had written how to end the war in Chechnya, had proposed technical, well-organised and other means for doing so, I would have been grateful."

The Kremlin has said Russian forces can withdraw only if the rebels disarm and has vowed to crush them if they do not.

Meanwhile Russia has denied neglecting its soldiers in Chechnya despite regular complaints about looting by Russian troops in the Caucasus republic.

"We are financing the soldiers in Chechnya sometimes to the detriment of other units," General Vladimir Churakov, the Defence Ministry's logistics chief said Thursday.

He said it was true that "the financial situation of our army is deplorable" but it was "morally impossible not to take care of our men in Chechnya who are in a war situation."

Gen. Churakov said the Defence Ministry had sometimes had to dip into normally "untouchable" war reserves in order to feed the men in Chechnya.

The version given last

Mandela warns against threat of complacency

CAPE TOWN (AFP) — President Nelson Mandela, in an optimistic speech laced with caution, warned Friday that complacency could destroy the economic achievements of his 21-month-old government of national unity.

As he opened the third session here of South Africa's first democratic, non-racial parliament, Mr. Mandela called for "a new patriotism" and a "national vision" to battle looming economic problems.

To facilitate foreign investment, Mr. Mandela said, "our monetary authorities are reviewing... on an ongoing basis, the timing and pace of lifting existing exchange controls."

"For us, it is not a matter of whether, but of when these controls will be phased out," he said.

Mr. Mandela's announcement of a planned ban on weapons at public rallies targeted the violent province of Kwazulu-Natal, where Zulus carry their traditional weapons — spears, fighting sticks, war clubs and shields — to political

rallies.

Mr. Mbeki was cautious when questioned on the applicability of such legislation, saying: "a knobkerrie (war club), in one context — if used at a cultural event — may not be a dangerous weapon; in another context it may be."

He stressed that Mr. Mandela, in his speech, had lumped the political violence in Kwazulu-Natal along with gang warfare and battles between rival collective taxi companies, as simple "criminal conduct."

"I don't think anybody says: 'We are politically disadvantaged, so we go to Stanger (town) to the flash-points of violence in Kwazulu-Natal and kill people,'" Mr. Mbeki explained.

The new anti-crime strategy, Mr. Mandela said, would aim to combine the efforts of the police, justice and prison systems to bring more efficiency to crime prevention, the apprehension of criminals and their rehabilitation.

Mr. Mandela, a red flower on the lapel of his grey suit,

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Jordan Times

An independent Arab national daily published in English by the Jordan Press Foundation
Established 1975

الجزيرة الأردنية الوطنية المستقلة المنشورة بالإنجليزية من قبل المؤسسة الصحفية الأردنية
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Chairman of the Board of Directors:

MAHMOUD AL KAYED

Director General:

MOHAMMAD AMAD

Editor-in-Chief:

GEORGE S. HAWATMEH

Editorial and advertising offices:

Jordan Press Foundation,
University Road, P.O. Box 6710, Amman, Jordan.

Telephones: 684311, 699634

Telex: 21497 ALRAI JO

Facsimile: 696183

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No toll-free calls, we are Jordanian

IT MAY come as a surprise to many to learn that Jordan is among the handful of countries which do not permit toll-free telephone calls abroad or call-back services just as it does not allow reverse-charge services except to a few selected countries.

No doubt the computerised mechanism that blocks international toll-free calls from Jordan to North America (the numbers that start with 1-800) and the ban against call-back services is designed to assure for the state-owned Telecommunications Corporation (TCC) continued monopoly and consequently handsome profit by forcing Jordanian subscribers to use its services only. But such an approach by the TCC can be described as either lacking in imagination or bordering on extortion.

Very conveniently overlooked in this practice is the fact that when government agencies use state power to beat back competition then there is something that is seriously wrong and it should be immediately addressed.

A stark reminder of such misuse of state power came last week when a decision was taken by a special committee on telecommunications decreeing that businesses would not be allowed tax exemptions on telephone charges paid to external organisations.

To begin with we fail to see what business it is for the special committee to instruct the Income Tax Department not to allow such exemptions. Secondly, how would Jordan like to be known as being among only three or four other countries which do not permit their peoples to take advantage of services that are offered by external parties at little or no cost at all to the Treasury except perhaps to deprive a state agency from making profits? Is our economy any worse than that of Costa Rica or Honduras, or Egypt for that matter, which all allow such services? Or is it the norm that we in Jordan should remain a captive market for state agencies in such usually open and free enterprises as telecommunications? How would Jordan like to be known to foreign investors (many of them will hopefully come from U.S. and Europe where monopoly in telecommunications is a thing of the past) as a country where basic concepts of free market economy are not respected by a state-run corporation?

We could really understand the TCC's anxiety against competition if the corporation was losing money. Likewise we do appreciate the fact that the TCC is one of the very few state agencies that actually make money for an otherwise cash-strapped treasury. But it might be borne in mind that citizens here have had enough with excesses by the TCC, which charges rates for international calls that are much higher than in most countries (compare 70 to 80 cents a minute for a call from the U.S. to Jordan as opposed to nearly three dinars — \$4.6 — per minute for a call to the U.S. through the TCC). The corporation, by its own admission, has been increasing its profits year after year, but unfortunately without paying enough attention to the basic needs of either the citizens or foreign investors or even the highly disgruntled media representatives in Jordan.

Add to the above the fact that the actual services offered by the TCC leave a lot to be desired, and you will understand fully why the corporation has one of the worst reputations any agency in any modernising country has at any level (except when it comes to making money for the treasury).

We are fully aware of and appreciate the declared decision of the government to open up the telecommunications sector for competition. But declarations are one thing, practices are yet another, as the TCC is definitely telling us.

ARABIC PRESS COMMENTARIES

A WRITER in Al Ra'i daily bitterly criticised William Perry, the American defence secretary, for his statement Wednesday that the U.S. is coordinating efforts with Jordan and other countries in the Middle East to secure the downfall of the Baghdad regime. By making such a statement, the U.S. secretary is doing a great harm to Jordan's national economy and investments in the Kingdom, said Tareq Masarweh. One look at the performance of the financial market, which serves as a barometer of the ups and downs in the Jordanian economy, shows that Jordan's industry, transport and transit operations via Aqaba have plummeted sharply due to the unstable political situation in the region and as a result of the irresponsible statements by American and other officials, the writer pointed out. He said that the American secretary does not give any regard to Jordan's economy and his statement is hurting all Jordanians. If the 30-nation coalition in the war against the Iraqi regime, backed by a formidable firepower, was not able to bring down that regime, how can coordination with Jordan do the trick, asked the writer. He charged that the U.S. is interested in using Jordan to achieve American objectives, adding that while Washington expresses the desire to safeguard Jordan as a state, it is also keen on keeping the Kingdom weak and unable to stand on its own feet.

THE U.N. Security Council's stand vis-à-vis Sudan reaffirms the concept that the U.N. organisation is adopting a double standard policy in its dealings with different countries of the world and different issues, according to Dr. Salah Jarrar, a writer for Al Ra'i daily. If Sudan is to be considered by the U.N. Security Council as a terrorist state due to its refusal to extradite three citizens who allegedly were involved in an assassination attempt on President Mubarak, then the same council should adopt a similar attitude against Israel, the U.S. and Russia, for practising terrorism against weak and poor countries of the world, said the writer.

Jordanian Perspective

Premier — the right man at the right time

By Dr. Musa Keilani

THE APPOINTMENT of Abdul Karim Kabariti as prime minister did not come as a surprise to most observers of the Jordanian political scene since it was clear as far back as three years ago that Mr. Kabariti would not remain simply a member of the cabinet, as he was then, and that he was headed for higher office (in fact I know of someone who this week coolly collected a bet he made in February 1992 that Mr. Kabariti would head a government before the year 1997). It was only a matter of timing. The only element of surprise, if any at all, was that he secured a mandate to head a government at least one year before some observers expected, against the backdrop of anticipation that the Sharif Zeid Ben Shaker government would remain in office until after the 1997 elections.

In any event, the change in government represents a major landmark in Jordan's recent political history in that it is the opening that His Majesty King Hussein offered to the talents of our young generation to break away from the traditional governance that characterised Jordan for many decades. No doubt the opening stemmed from a strong realisation and conviction that Jordan should leap ahead to remain in the middle of changes in the international political scene, and any lagging behind would only be detrimental to the long-term interests of the Kingdom.

The mandate of the Kabariti government is clear: Give a new impetus to the process of normalisation of relations with Israel and efforts to realise close economic interaction between the two countries; reaffirm that the Palestinian people are determining their own destiny with no

external influence, and that the Kingdom would support all decisions taken by their legitimate leadership to secure their inalienable rights on their soil; continue the Jordanian diplomacy that has made fresh breakthrough in the Kingdom's quest to establish strong relations with all Arab countries and set its ties with Europe, North America and the Far East at an even keel that would allow it to continue to play its rightful role in the region as well as the international scene.

The very fact that all the Arab countries in the Gulf were represented in a meeting of Arab labour ministers held in Amman in 1992, for the first time since the 1991 Gulf crisis, was an indication of then labour minister Kabariti's convincing powers. Recalling that occasion today serves as a reminder that one of the priorities of Mr. Kabariti after entering government then was to address the abnormality in Jordan's relations with some of the Gulf countries. The impending visit of His Majesty the King to Saudi Arabia this week is one of the realisation of the targets that Mr. Kabariti had set and worked to achieve with determination and resolve.

On the internal front, Mr. Kabariti's personal background as a businessman who appreciates the value of free market economy and free enterprise makes him perhaps an ideal prime minister at this point in Jordan's history, when the need of the day is to energise the entrepreneurial abilities of the Jordanian business community most quickly and take advantage of the opportunities that are emerging in the wake of the breakthroughs in the Arab-Israeli peace process. The new prime minister is in a very strong

position to offer the kind of political and economic comfort that foreign investors look for when they make investment decisions.

Indeed, we are hearing today voices from some quarters that they are disappointed with the make-up of the Kabariti cabinet and that the new prime minister could have done much better in his selection of some of his colleagues. We have also heard that women activists are complaining that instead of increasing the number of women in government more than the two in the Sharif Zeid cabinet, Mr. Kabariti reduced it to one in what the activists describe as a breach of a promise Jordan made at the World Conference on Women held in Beijing last year.

Regardless of the genuity of the complaints, which are of course regular features of the Jordanian political scene whenever government changes take place, one has to give some time to Mr. Kabariti to prove that his choices and approaches were the right ones in the long run. What we as Jordanians are concerned with are results, and it is up to the new prime minister and his colleagues, regardless of their background or outlook or gender, to deliver what we obviously see as promises of a better political, economic, cultural and social life for the nation.

Let us not personalise the government. Let us look at the new cabinet as a single energetic unit that not only represents our aspirations but is also capable of realising them as long as it has our wholehearted support and cooperation. Let us give the government some time before we judge it.

THE WEEK IN PRINT

Difficult task awaits the new premier and his government

REVIEWED BY ELIA NASRALLAH

MOST OF the editorials and the columnists' articles appearing in the local Arabic press in the past week focused attention on the new government and its prospects for success and the challenges facing it in the coming stage. Local issues and pan-Arab affairs were also focused on by the writers.

Describing Prime Minister Abdul Karim Kabariti as diligent and an optimist, Sultan Harab, a writer for Al Ra'i daily, said that given carte blanche by King Hussein to carry out reform and change, the prime minister has a good chance to succeed and implement the King's directives.

The writer said that achievement is not measured by what the government claims about itself but rather by the extent to which the public feels certain concrete steps have been taken to improve the general conditions in the country.

He said the public has heard a great deal from the previous governments about change and reform, but has seen nothing materialise to date.

A columnist for Al Dustour demanded from the new government to re-examine the draft elections law prepared by the previous administration, consecrating the one person one vote system because such a law is not fair and did not take into account the demographic distribution in Jordan.

Jihad Jbara also demanded that the new government refrain from adopting a law on press and publication which was drafted under the previous government since it would do injustice to the media and the Jordanian journalists.

The writer expressed hope that the new government would give due attention to the question of unemployment as was directed by the King's letter of appointment because this is one of the main chronic issues facing Jordan.

In discussing King Hussein's letter of appointment to the new government, Tareq Masarweh, a columnist for Al Ra'i said that the directives covered issues accumulated over 42 years and awaiting solutions.

The writer said it is clear that the government has no magic wand to solve all these issues overnight, but Jordanians would be satisfied if the government could handle half of these issues during its present mandate.

The writer advised the government to move fast towards achieving the aspired change and to move ahead with plans to bring about the required reform.

Describing the present government as one of national reconciliation, Hamadeh Faraneh, a writer for Al Dustour, said that the cabinet represents all parliamentary blocs except for the Islamists.

By involving the majority of parliamentary blocs in his government, Mr. Kabariti is reasserting the role of

the deputies in handling public affairs, as well as enacting laws. Indeed, the present government has a wide base representing different political spectrums, a welcome development in Jordan and an essential step to ensure the success of change and reform, said the writer.

By including the president of the Bar Association in the government, Mr. Kabariti has opened the door for reconciliation between the government and the unions, following months of strained relations.

The white revolution which King Hussein has called for in his letter of appointment to the new government represents a historic turning point in Jordan's political life, said Ibrahim Al Absi, a writer for Al Ra'i daily.

Indeed, the aspired change and reform hoped for under such a revolution are timely and badly needed in the country for Jordan to cater to the requirements of the regional and international developments, according to the writer.

He said that there is urgent need for restructuring the country's institutions, adding that such an endeavour is expected to achieve success at the political, social and economic levels, given the enthusiasm of the prime minister and his team and their optimism to realise the aspired development for their country.

In the view of Fakhri Kavar, a writer for Al Dustour, nothing on the surface

distinguishes the new government from the previous administrations in Jordan in terms of announcing dramatic programmes and eloquent government policy statements.

The chronic issues that faced the previous governments are staring the present government in the face and the real test lies in the results, the writer said.

Of course, the new government will have to abide by the Royal directives concerning the Armed Forces, the relations with Arab countries, reforms in public administration and confronting the chronic issues of poverty and unemployment, said the writer.

But on the whole, he added, one should feel optimistic at this stage and hope that the government will speak little and do a great deal more because deeds speak louder than words.

Ramadan Rawashdeh, a writer for Al Ra'i, said five main challenges face the new government, and the manner in which this government deals with them, will reflect the extent of its future success or failure.

He said that the challenges include public freedoms, the question of government's relations with professional unions, the draft elections law, relations with the opposition parties and dealings with the media.

Questions like unemployment, poverty and acceptance of students in state universities are also issues

which require full government attention, added the writer.

He said that the new government has a good chance to rise to the occasion and prove its ability to implement the King's directives which aim at bringing about a real change in Jordanian life.

Munes Razzaz, a writer for Al Ra'i, said that since 1991 Jordan has witnessed the formation of five cabinets, and the relative short mandates given them were not sufficient to help each realise many achievements.

It is hoped that the new government will have a longer life than its predecessors and will be able to carry out the aspired reforms and changes as contained in the King's letter of appointment, said the writer.

It is sure that the new government can by no means achieve miracles, he added, but stability and sufficient time can naturally help it attain good results.

May God help the new prime minister in shouldering the heavy burdens awaiting his cabinet in the days ahead, said Mohammad Kawash, a writer for Al Dustour.

It is good that the prime minister has involved the main parliamentary blocs in his cabinet because he needs to create sufficient harmony within the executive branch so as to face the mounting political and economic problems facing Jordan, said the writer.

The new government, he said, groups ministers who

had played key roles in handling negotiations with Israel and the Palestine National Authority, and this is bound to be of great help to the new government in handling relevant issues.

But the government will still have to deal with chronic issues that have plagued Jordan for so long.

The magnitude of issues and heavy burdens facing the new government prompts one to sympathise with it and to wish it success in carrying out the "white revolution" as recommended by King Hussein, said Al Aswad newspaper.

Mr. Kabariti realises too well that Jordan is in need of urgent steps to be taken in the course of achieving partnership with Europe, pursuing efforts to cement ties with Palestine and Israel and the Gulf states, dealing with the Iraqi question and the new regional order, said the paper.

But Mr. Kabariti also realises the delicate situation on the domestic front and is bound to work under pressure to achieve satisfactory results, added the paper.

It is true that the prime minister has achieved success regarding the foreign policy, especially in promoting ties with Gulf states, while serving as foreign minister, said the paper, but his new position, it said, requires from him to handle domestic as well as external issues; for him to succeed in such an endeavour, he needs all the backing he could get said the paper.

Clinton campaign ready for early election fight

By Laurence McQuillan

Reuter

WASHINGTON — As Republicans prepare for the first votes of their presidential nomination fight, Democratic President Bill Clinton is gearing up for a bruising general election campaign that may begin as early as April.

While most public attention has focused on the nine-man field of candidates on the Republican side, Mr. Clinton and his team have put together an impressive political operation that has achieved most of its early goals.

Unlike previous White House occupants who tended to put off the drudgery of reelection campaigning until the last minute, this president has spent the past year meeting roughly once-a-week with a small cadre of

advisers devoted to winning a Nov. 5 election still nine months away.

Those sessions already have borne fruit: no one has stepped forth to challenge Mr. Clinton for renomination even though many Democrats blamed him for the devastating 1994 election defeat that gave Republicans control of Congress.

"They amassed so much money, so early, it scared off anyone thinking about a challenge," said one veteran Democratic Party activist.

"They also reminded folks about 1980," this party veteran said, referring to Senator Edward Kennedy's ill-fated challenge to President Jimmy Carter. That fight weakened the party and helped Republican Ronald Reagan win the White House.

Participants in the political war council include Mr. Clinton, Vice President Al Gore, White House Chief of Staff Leon Panetta, Deputy Chief of Staff Harold Ickes, White House Political Director Douglas Sosnick and Senior Adviser George Stephanopoulos.

The group also has a team of outside political consultants, including Dick Morris — reprimanded by Mr. Clinton last week for an embarrassing effort to press Republican contender Senator Bob Dole into a federal budget deal — Robert Squire and the New York polling firm of Penn Schoen.

Ann Lewis, the campaign's deputy manager and the highest-ranking official in the reelection organisation structure, and Ronald Klain, the vice president's chief of staff,

complete the original team.

"We sat down a year ago and made some decisions about how to set the campaign up," said Mr. Sosnick in an interview.

"We made a decision to start early, get the money raised and not spend it, and do the politics in the states," he said.

The Clinton campaign, which still has no campaign manager and only a very limited staff, collected almost all the funds allowed under federal election laws last year.

Mr. Sosnick said there was no rush to create the traditional campaign organisation.

"What we have been doing has been applying lessons from previous reelection campaigns out of the White House and trying to put it in real 1996 time," he said.

"If you hire staff and a large infrastructure, you've got to feed it," he said. "The more you have, the more they need... You just can't stop that spiral once it starts."

It was decided to wait until the spring to stage his traditional campaign kick-off — after the winner of the Republican nominating process has probably emerged.

"One of the things we're doing well this year is that we aren't automatically doing what people usually do," said Mr. Lewis, who is also the campaign's director of communications.

"We sat down and figured out what we have to do, when do we have to do it and let's get it done," she said. "And that is what we're doing."

Because most nominating contests this year will be over by the end of March, most political insiders believe the Republican choice should probably be known by April.

"That's when the general election starts taking shape," Ms. Lewis said.

Mr. Clinton made a political trip to New Hampshire last week and this week plans a two-day stop in Iowa. Those two states this month hold the first major voting events of the nominating process.

Despite his limited trips, there have been at least a dozen Clinton campaign operatives in both New Hampshire and Iowa to counter the rhetoric of the nine Republicans seeking the president's job.



A visitor in the British explorer Ernest Shackleton's hut in Antarctica ponders the remains of a meal left by Shackleton's expedition team in the early 1900s. The cold had freeze dried their tiny outpost in perfect condition (Reuter photo)

Eco-tourists trace polar explorers' steps

By Mark Trevelyan
Reuter

CAPE EVANS, Antarctica — A sleeping bag lies crumpled on Robert Falcon Scott's bunk. A saucer with a half-eaten meal sits on a wooden table.

Nearly a century on, the sturdy wooden huts of the early British explorers of Antarctica stand as monuments to their courage, their dreams, their tragedies.

But in their near-perfect state of freeze-dried preservation, they also remind the visitor that man's mark on the frozen wilderness continent can never be erased.

Scott built his first base at Hut Point, the southernmost point in the world's oceans accessible by ship. Today it is dwarfed by the giant U.S. McMurdo base alongside — a sprawling agglomeration the size of a small town.

In the past half-century, up to 50 scientific bases have sprung up in Antarctica, each generating fuel spills and waste. And some 9,000 tourists will this year visit a continent where scientists have found a set of footprints can last for 30 years.

A landmark 1991 accord set comprehensive rules for safeguarding the environment and protects Antarctica from minerals exploitation for a minimum 50 years.

But key nations have yet to ratify the accord and until they do, compliance is underpinned only by a voluntary agreement to behave between Mediterranean Arab countries and the European Union to coordinate Arab stands.

He added that his talks in Rabat also dealt with the role of Jordan, Morocco and other moderate Arab countries can play in pushing forward the Middle East peace process.

He said the talks also dealt with the final status of the Holy City of Jerusalem and means of ending the suffering of the Iraqi people and safeguarding Iraq's territorial integrity.

The Crown Prince said that the talks also focused on recent developments in the Arab region, with special emphasis on the economic developments which started with the convening of the Middle East and North Africa (MENA) economic summit in Casablanca and culminated in the Amman economic summit.

King Hassan II and Prince Hassan also discussed Jordanian-Moroccan efforts to unify Arab

as though it is in force.

Environmental groups are targeting the United States as the leading nation yet to ratify, saying only action by Washington will prompt others like Japan and Russia to follow.

"The main recalcitrant nations say: 'Look, don't hassle us. Even the U.S. hasn't done it yet, and they're supposed to be the good guys,'" said Maj de Poorter of Greenpeace in New Zealand.

"It's becoming an embarrassment that the U.S. hasn't ratified the protocol," said Darrel Schoeling of the New York-based International Association of Antarctic Tour Operators (IAATO).

In New Zealand, parliament has passed legislation setting fines and jail terms for offences such as interfering with Antarctic wildlife or introducing non-native species.

But much of the act will not come into force until other countries have ratified the 1991 accord, so its provisions are largely toothless.

Another grey area is the question of liability for environmental damage from tourism — especially when a single expedition can involve ships, travel operators and individual tourists from a number of countries.

"(If) the ship sinks and causes a great spill and significant environment damage, who pays the bill? Who's responsible?" asks Ricardo Roura, an Argentine geologist working for Greenpeace.

Some aspects of tourism are widely recognised as positive. Most visitors are well-informed and environmentally aware.

"It's quite evident that on this ship we have a group of travellers, not tourists," said Gerry Roberts, an Australian who paid \$37,000 to take his wife on a one-month cruise aboard a Russian icebreaker chartered by U.S.-based group expeditions.

"They know they have to show respect, they don't just trample over everything," said Tony Soper, a British naturalist and tour leader, says most visitors become strong advocates for Antarctica's protection.

"They are very serious about looking after the continent, and about going home as ambassadors for it — people that really care for it and want to make sure that there's no ill-advised development or exploitation of any kind."

While tourist numbers in Antarctica have trebled since the start of the decade, IAATO's Schoeling believes they are reaching a plateau.

"The Antarctic will always be an expensive destination that appeals to a limited number of people. It's a cold place, it's hard to get to, and frankly, for most of the world, there's not much there," he said.

These latter-day polar explorers pride themselves on taking nothing and leaving nothing behind — unlike their predecessors, who simply abandoned their fuel containers, food supplies and half-finished scientific experiments.

Golden syrup, rhubarb and tomato ketchup are threatening to spill from their ageing containers in Scott's cape evans hut, and nitrate film left behind by photographer Herbert Ponting is in danger of spontaneously combusting.

A large part of the work of new Zealand conservationists, who look after the huts, is to drain away the fuel and chemicals and safely dispose of them.

"Part of what we're doing is not only historical conservation but environmental protection," said Paul Chaplin of New Zealand's Antarctic heritage trust.

For the conservationists, tourism is a double-edged sword.

There is real concern that the moist, warm breath of some 700 visitors a year at Cape Evans, for example, may hasten the decay of precious artefacts.

But the \$25 per head levy on visiting tourist groups is a valuable source of funds for the trust, which is struggling on a small budget to preserve a piece of history.

"In the long term, we won't be able to do that alone. We'll need financial and technical assistance from as wide a range of sources as we can find," said Mr. Chaplin.

Police are also worried that agents trained in the ways of espionage will not follow strict procedures on evidence gathering and treatment of witnesses.

Opponents wonder why the Conservative government is so eager to find a new role for MI5, and allowing it to expand, when other public bodies are being forced to shave budgets.

"Is not the background to this the fact that the security service is running out of threats, and that a new one is having to be invented to save large public spending cuts," said opposition Labour MP Chris Mullins in a debate on the bill.

Civil rights groups say it is impossible to make a secret service fully accountable and want MI5 abolished.

"Having a secret police force will lead to more miscarriages of justice," said John Wadham from the campaign group Liberty.

MI5 is gradually shedding its secrecy. Founded in 1909, its existence was only officially acknowledged in the late 1980s.

On the rare occasions MI5 agents have given evidence in court they have done so from behind screens and without giving their names. Once identified, they are of little use as spies.

In an unprecedented move in 1991, MI5 announced that Stella Rimmington was to be its new chief — previously, it was illegal for anyone to publish so much as the name of the agency's head.

And in 1993, MI5 published a brochure telling the public about its work.

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Pope's message in Central America sidesteps poverty

By Michael Stott
Reuter

SAN SALVADOR — Pope John Paul II found plenty of applause in Central America for his message of peace and reconciliation but his homilies said little about poverty and Protestantism, two of the gravest threats to today's Catholic Church, critics claimed.

In each of the three countries he visited this week — Guatemala, Nicaragua and El Salvador — the 75-year-old Pontiff found large, cheering crowds and sympathetic pro-Vatican presidents.

The Pope responded by hailing their transformation from battleground of the superpowers in 1983, when he last visited, to proving ground for peace and democracy.

But Catholics here say their top concerns are worsening poverty and the rapid rise of Evangelical Protestant sects, which have wooed millions of worshippers away from Rome — 8,000 a day in Latin America, by one estimate.

Young Salvadorean churchgoers handed the Pontiff a message during his visit to the cathedral of San Salvador complaining that gang violence, drug trafficking, prostitution and narcotics addiction were ruining their lives.

They also attacked "neoliberalism" — the free market economic model adopted by most of Latin America over the past decade but blamed by critics for leaving many of the region's poor out in the cold.

"We continue to be alienated by the media, a dehumanising instrument of that system of death which is neoliberalism," their cry for help said. "This condemns us to live in a world of fantasies, which fills us with frustration and life without purpose."

The Pope politely received the petition and handed it to an aide without public comment.

During his tour of Guatemala, Nicaragua and El Salvador, countries where peasants can earn as little as \$2 a day, he offered few clues about the path their war-torn economies should follow.

"The church has no technical answers for these problems," he said in a brief evening departure speech in Managua, "but it does want... to say its word to promote international solidarity and an ever more alive conscience..."

The Pontiff did, however, make clear what he did not like — Sandinista revolutionary rule in Nicaragua in the 1980s, which he compared to a "dark night".

He also attacked the ideological extremes of right and left, blaming them for turning Central America into a bloodbath during the past decade.

In his Managua speech, the Pontiff referred to "the terrible plagues of poverty and ignorance" stalking the region and called on the government to tackle the problem.

It was one of the few references he made in his Central American discourses to poverty — a key concern in a region still struggling to rise from the ashes of superpower war.

One of those disappointed by the lack of strong words on poverty was Dagoberto Gutierrez, a former commander in Salvador's left-wing FMLN guerrillas.

"The Pope brought a message of joy for a country without war but he did not refer to the enormous social problems," he said.

During his trip, Pope John Paul came face to face with the power of Evangelical sects, which in Guatemala have lured more than a quarter of the population into their temples.

Protestant radio stations were forced by the government to carry live broadcasts of the Pontiff's engagements in their country but lost no time in making clear their opposition.

"We would just like to explain to our listeners that we do not agree with anything at all of what has been transmitted," radio Cultural FM said after broadcasting a Pope event live to listeners.

Evangelical followers also lost no time in defacing or tearing down Pope posters and welcome banners posted in the streets of Guatemala City, Catholic worshippers complained.

Britain's secret service wins new lease of life

By Helen Smith
Reuter

LONDON — British secret agents are highly experienced, armed with state of the art surveillance devices — and under-employed.

Left short of work by the end of the cold war and a ceasefire in Northern Ireland, Britain's MI5 has welcomed a new remit to tackle organised crime, believing it gives the counter espionage agency another purpose in life.

A bill on its way through parliament to extend MI5's powers looks almost certain to become law. The government says it needs a new strategy to fight organised crime, which has brought drug-driven gun battles to British cities.

"We would do well to remember that the greatest infringement of human rights in our society comes from the bullets, the knives and the drugs which are the stock in trade of the criminals against whom this bill is aimed," said Britain's Home Secretary (Interior Minister) Michael Howard.

But the bill has many critics who worry about giving the shadowy MI5 greater powers without making it more accountable.

Police are also worried that agents trained in the ways of espionage will not follow strict procedures on evidence gathering and treatment of witnesses.

Opponents wonder why the Conservative government is so eager to find a new role for MI5, and allowing it to expand, when other public bodies are being forced to shave budgets.

"Is not the background to this the fact that the security service is running out of threats, and that a new one is having to be invented to save large public spending cuts," said opposition Labour MP Chris Mullins in a debate on the bill.

Civil rights groups say it is impossible to make a secret service fully accountable and want MI5 abolished.

"Having a secret police force will lead to more miscarriages of justice," said John Wadham from the campaign group Liberty.

MI5 is gradually shedding its secrecy. Founded in 1909, its existence was only officially acknowledged in the late 1980s.

On the rare occasions MI5 agents have given evidence in court they have done so from behind screens and without giving their names. Once identified, they are of little use as spies.

In an unprecedented move in 1991, MI5 announced that Stella Rimmington was to be its new chief — previously, it was illegal for anyone to publish so much as the name of the agency's head.

And in 1993, MI5 published a brochure telling the public about its work.

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Jordan, Morocco exchange views

(Continued from page 1)

territorial integrity.

The Crown Prince said that the talks also focused on recent developments in the Arab region, with special emphasis on the economic developments which started with the convening of the Middle East and North Africa (MENA) economic summit in Casablanca and culminated in the Amman economic summit.

King Hassan II and Prince Hassan also discussed Jordanian-Moroccan efforts to unify Arab

stands, the Middle East peace process, the situation in Iraq and means of alleviating the suffering of the Iraqi people.

The Moroccan monarch and the Crown Prince stressed their countries' keenness to reactivate inter-Arab cooperation, especially on some important questions such as the issue of Jerusalem.

Prince Hassan, who was seen off at Rabat airport by Moroccan Prime Minister Abdul Latif Filali and senior officials, performed Friday prayers at Lala Sukaina Mosque in Rabat.

The Crown Prince was accompanied on the visit by a delegation comprising His Royal Highness Prince Ghazi Ben Mohammad, who is the King's cultural secretary, the Crown Prince's private advisor Mohammad Saqqaf and Royal Scientific Society (RSS) President and Secretary General of the Higher Council for Science and Technology Hani Mulk.

Prince Hassan was received at the airport upon return home by Prime Minister Abdul Karim Al Kabarti and senior officials.

The Al Watan daily also quoted reports in Tunisian newspapers that Mr. Ben Alawi was carrying a proposal to change the term to GCC secretary-general to a non-renewable three years — instead of the current renewable three-year term.

According to the reports, Mr. Ben Alawi also proposed that the next secretary general be a Qatari — as long as Qatar recognised Mr. Hojjeilan's tenure.

Qatar has been at odds with the Saudis and others in the GCC in recent years because of the emirate's increasingly independent foreign policy. That includes restoring relations with Iraq, still shunned by Saudi Arabia and Kuwait.

The GCC was originally formed in 1961 shortly after the start of the 1980-88 Iran-Iraq war by Gulf Arab states who were trying to form a common front against a perceived threat from Iran.

Although some advances have been made in areas such as trade and economic integration, the military alliance remained stillborn.

Oman mediating GCC rift

(Continued from page 1)

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Jordan supports all efforts

(Continued from page 1)

sovereignty of its eastern neighbour.

In comments carried by international news agencies on Thursday, Dr. Muasher said Jordan appreciated the support that the U.S. extends to the Kingdom and that Washington would soon make good its promise to give fighter jets to the Kingdom.

Dr. Muasher also denied reports that the government had placed a ban against Iraqi Foreign Minister Mohammad Sahaf entering Jordan in retaliation for his verbal attacks against Jordanian policy and saying that the Kingdom would be better off seeking a federation of among its own people rather than recommending it for Iraq.

"It is simply not true," Dr. Muasher told the Jordan Times when asked about the report of the purported ban against Mr. Sahaf.

In other comments carried by the local media on Friday, Dr. Muasher described His Majesty King Hussein's upcoming visit to Saudi Arabia on Sunday as a turning point in Jordanian diplomacy.

"His visit will be the crowning of efforts by Jordan to improve its relations with Gulf countries," he said.

The King will also visit Egypt on Wednesday in response to an invitation from President Hosni Mubarak.

Jordan's Ambassador to Egypt Nayef Al Qadi described the King's visit to Cairo as part of consultation and coordination "between the King and President Mubarak on Arab, regional and international issues in addition to the latest developments of the Middle East peace process."

In a statement to the Jordan News Agency, Petra, Mr. Qadi said the visit was aimed at "broadening channels of communication, coordination and cooperation between both countries, developing agreements and fixing a date for the meeting of the Joint Higher Jordanian Egyptian Committee in Am-

man, following the change of governments in both countries."

Mr. Qadi said the two leaders will discuss the latest developments on the Palestinian arena where the Palestinians elected their legislative council and the progress in Syrian-Israeli negotiations, in addition to the outcome of the latest visit by U.S. Secretary of State Warren Christopher to the region.

Mr. Qadi praised the Egyptian-Jordanian relations, saying that there "is an excellent degree of cooperation and coordination between both countries."

Peres increases poll lead

(Continued from page 1)

The Gallup survey gave a Labour list for parliament 48 per cent of the vote against 35 per cent for a Likud-Tsomet list.

Mr. Peres told U.S. Secretary of State Warren Christopher this week that he intended to move elections on from October to May 28, diplomatic sources said. Mr. Peres has said he will make an official announcement on the elections next week.

Mr. Peres has consistently led Mr. Netanyahu in polls since the Rabin assassination. In addition to choosing a new parliament, voters will for the first time directly elect their prime minister.

The poll found 52 per cent would vote for Mr. Peres, 30 per cent for Mr. Netanyahu, seven per cent for Levy, 11 per cent were undecided.

In the parallel election for parliament seats, the Dahaf poll found Mr. Peres' Likud would win 45 of the 120 seats in parliament against 36 for a combined Likud-Tsomet list.

هنا عن الفصل

Arab Potash Company profits record JD 42m

AMMAN (R) — Arab Potash Company, stimulated by fast-growing Asian markets and higher production posted a 75 per cent rise in pre-tax profits to a record 42 million dinars in 1995, its general manager said Thursday.

"We exceeded our targets in profits, production and sales in 1995... the record results are due to an increase in sales with higher production and the improvement in prices," Suleiman Al Hawari, general manager of Arab Potash Company, the country's only producer, told Reuters.

Pre-tax profits were 24 million dinars in 1994. Mr. Hawari said total sales rose 35 per cent to a record \$182 million in 1995 from \$135 million in 1994 with a strong rebound in demand in Asia. Sales are recorded in U.S. dollars.

Jordan is one of the world's major producers of potash, a key ingredient in the fertiliser industry, and is expected to benefit from the continued growth of Asian markets.

Mr. Hawari said demand in fast-growing Asian economies was a result of market-oriented policies adopted by its traditional markets. He said Asia had to meet population growth and increase output of agricultural land.

"Demand has improved in Asian markets, all this leads to an increase in demand annually, especially since we are dealing with a product linked to world food needs," Mr. Hawari said.

India was the leading importer in 1995 with 430,000 tonnes followed by 210,000 tonnes to Malaysia and 169,000 tonnes to Indonesia.

Production rose 15 per cent to 280,000 tonnes in 1995, exceeding a target of 1.7 million against 1,550,000 tonnes in 1994. A new \$125 million plant that came on stream added 400,000 tonnes to the previous capacity of 1.4 million tonnes annually.

Foreign and domestic sales rose 16 per cent to 1,764,000 tonnes in 1995 from 1,516,000 tonnes in 1994.

OPEC needs to cut extra output to cushion Iraqi oil return, experts say

ABU DHABI (AFP) — OPEC should cut its excess production running at more than one million barrels per day (b/d) to absorb Iraq's possible return to the oil market and avert a price collapse, officials and experts said Friday.

The 12-nation Organisation of Petroleum Exporting Countries (OPEC), already pumping near 1.2 billion b/d above its official output ceiling and an agreement between Iraq and the United Nations on limited crude exports could push extra supplies to nearly two million b/d, they said.

"OPEC's compliance with its production quotas means withdrawal of some quantities of crude oil from the market to be replaced by Iraqi crude," the official United Arab Emirates (UAE) news agency WAM said.

"This will enable the organisation to face Iraq's partial return to the market without the need to hold an emergency meeting of its oil ministers or change its production ceiling or quota system," it added.

Iraq and the U.N. opened

negotiations in New York this week on an oil-for-food deal that could pave the way for Baghdad's return to the global oil market after an absence of more than five years due to sanctions imposed by the Security Council when Iraqi forces invaded Kuwait in 1990.

U.N. officials have remained tight-lipped on the likely outcome of the talks, which were adjourned Thursday until Monday.

But cash-strapped Iraq, the second biggest oil power, has voiced optimism over an agreement, which it hopes would gradually remove the embargo.

The U.N. deal, enshrined in Resolution 986, provides for an export of \$2 billion worth of crude over six months. This means the pumping of around 700,000 b/d in current prices and more than one million b/d if prices plunge to \$10.

Experts said OPEC members exceeding their assigned quotas needed to slash the additional supplies to avert further pressure on prices.

While world oil demand is projected to grow by around

1.6 million b/d in 1996, more than that amount would be supplied by non-OPEC states, mainly North Sea producers Britain and Norway, the experts said.

"Oil prices are already under physical pressure by over-production in OPEC and psychological pressure by the negotiations between Iraq and the U.N. Without an OPEC move, they could further decline if the negotiations produced results and Iraqi crude begins flowing," a Gulf-based oil executive said.

"Any decline in oil prices will hurt OPEC member states except Iraq. Most of them are producing near capacity and the decline means lower income while it means more oil supplies by Iraq, he added.

Oil prices began the new year on a fire base due to a cold spell in the United States and lower stockpiles. They exceeded \$17 before they slipped to around \$16.2 with the announcement of the Iraq-U.N. talks on Jan. 29.

On Thursday, Brent North Sea crude traded at around \$16.66 for March delivery.

With a ceiling of 24.52 million b/d and quota violations by some members, OPEC loses nearly \$9 billion a year from a \$1 prices drop.

OPEC has said it would hold an extraordinary meeting once Iraq is permitted to resume crude exports. But it is not clear if a full ministerial meeting would be substituted by the group's plan to convene a meeting of its monitoring committee, which group OPEC's secretary general and the oil ministers of Kuwait, Nigeria and the UAE.

"OPEC's intention to hold a meeting of the production monitoring committee shows it is moving in the right direction in dealing with the possibility of Iraq's partial return to the world oil market," WAM said.

"All members of the organisation should display a degree of commitment to their production quotas to absorb the coming Iraqi crude if the negotiations with the U.N. succeed. Otherwise, they have to sit and wait for a certain fall in oil prices and their earnings," it concluded.

Spain, Morocco to build tunnel under Mediterranean

RABAT (R) — Morocco and Spain have agreed to forge ahead with a century-old dream of linking Europe and Africa by building a tunnel under the narrow Gibraltar strait by the 21st century.

"We hope to start geological and scientific work (for the tunnel) by 1997 but it might take longer than that... it is a problem of financing," Moroccan Finance Minister Mohammed Kabbaj told Reuters.

A joint communique issued at the end of a two-day visit by Spanish Prime Minister Felipe Gonzalez said the tunnel was of enormous political and economic value to both countries, which have bilateral trade exceeding \$1 billion.

"Conscious of the political and economic importance of a fixed link between Europe and Africa beneath the Straits of Gibraltar, which would consolidate regional cooperation, the two parties

congratulate themselves on taking the project beyond the study phase," the communique said.

Analysts have estimated the proposed 22-kilometre tunnel at the mouth of Mediterranean, one of the greatest engineering challenges in the world, would cost more than \$10 billion.

They say the project would be as significant in geopolitical terms as the building of the Suez Canal which linked the Red Sea and the Mediterranean.

Diplomats say the tunnel link was given new impetus after last November's Euro-Mediterranean conference in Barcelona, which sought to embrace countries south of the Mediterranean into a free trade pact with the European Union (EU).

Mr. Kabbaj said that once funding was raised for the project, the first phase could begin as early as 1997, although he doubted this was

feasible.

This involved construction of a service gallery at a cost of 315 million ECU (\$253 million), to be followed by a single-rail undersea tunnel down to a depth of 900 metres.

Mr. Kabbaj said Morocco and Spain would seek aid from the EU and other Western donors to fund the project, which would significantly boost Morocco's access to its main export market.

Morocco has asked France to provide its expertise in view of its experience with the Channel Tunnel linking France and Britain.

A pipeline already runs on the seabed across the strait, one of the world's busiest shipping lanes, to carry gas from Algeria to Spain and Portugal.

A Spanish first proposed such a tunnel back in 1869 but the idea was scotched as "useless and impossible."

Japan's dependence on M.E. oil growing

TOKYO (AP) — Japan's dependency on Middle Eastern oil has risen to almost 80 per cent of its total imports because major oil-producing nations in Asia are exporting less to meet growing domestic demand, officials said.

Japan imported 207 million kilolitres (1.3 billion barrels) of crude oil from the Middle East last year, accounting for 78.6 per cent of the country's total imports, according to a recent government report.

The percentage was Japan's highest since 1979, an official of the ministry of international trade and industry said.

Japan, which must import virtually all of its oil, relied on the Middle East for more than 80 per cent of its oil

imports until an oil crisis in early 1970s triggered by a Middle Eastern war.

Japan then diversified its imports, bringing the Middle East share down to 60 per cent in the 1980s.

But ministry officials said Japan has returned to Middle East oil in recent years because China and Indonesia are cutting back on exports to meet their own increasing demands for oil due to robust domestic economies.

Last year, crude oil imports from the Middle East were up 0.5 per cent from the 1994 level, while imports from Indonesia and China, two of Asia's major oil-producing nations, dropped sharply.

Japan's current account surplus drops to \$110.4 billion in 1995

TOKYO (AFP) — Japan's current account surplus fell 15.5 per cent to \$10.73 billion from a year earlier, and the trade surplus dropped 9.5 per cent to \$13.44 billion.

Private economists said more declines were expected in the coming months, since imports would continue to grow at a much faster pace than that of exports.

They said Japanese manufacturers were still in the process of structural changes after shifting production bases abroad, which would in turn keep a tight lid on export growth at least for the rest of this calendar year.

"There is a structural shift in Japan towards overseas production. At the same time we're seeing a willingness in both consumers and Japanese companies to boost purchase of foreign goods," said Andrew Shipley, an economist at Schroder Securities.

Price-sensitive consumers tended to favour cheap imported goods, especially from Asia, while companies were becoming more reliant on overseas suppliers to boost profits during the current

prolonged economic doldrums, economists said.

In 1995, exports grew 11.2 per cent from the previous year, compared with a 22.8 per cent increase in imports.

The current account balance of payments comprises exports and imports of actual goods as well as payments and receipts for so-called "invisible" items, such as shipping, banking and tourism.

The deficit in the travel account rose to \$33.5 billion in 1995, a record high for the fourth consecutive year, reflecting solid growth in the number of Japanese travelling overseas.

The outflow of Japanese capital to higher-yielding overseas assets also helped boost the invisible trade deficit and in turn reduced the overall current account surplus in 1995.

"I think the low interest

rate environment in Japan is certainly going to encourage Japanese investors to look overseas... Frankly, yields in Japan are quite low, and investment opportunities are limited," Mr. Shipley said.

Masaru Takagi, chief economist at Fuji Research Institute called the latest shrinkage in the current account surplus "a welcome phenomenon" for the Japanese economy.

He said import growth may reduce the overall surplus to between \$95 billion and \$100 billion in 1996.

The likely improvement in the external imbalance — a source of fierce trade friction with the United States — should translate into a firm dollar of 95-110 yen for the time being, which should aid Japan's export industry, he added.

HOROSCOPE

FORECAST FOR SATURDAY, FEBRUARY 10, 1996

ARIES: (March 21 to April 19) Concentrate on business affairs and know exactly how to handle them in the morning today, and then later you can get the added data you need.

TAURUS: (April 20 to May 20) Get your appearance improved in a more modern way today, and then later this evening you can handle monetary affairs with great success.

GEMINI: (May 21 to June 21) Get out in the world of activity early in the morning today and get much, completed in a constructive manner after you have gotten rid of a grouchy.

MOON CHILDREN: (June 22 to July 21) There may be a delay in attaining some day-time goal today, but be patient and it will soon be yours in terms of your success.

LEO: (July 22 to August 21) Use tact in handling a bigwig in the morning today, so that you gain the favour you want, then later this evening you can be with good friends.

VIRGO: (August 22 to September 22) You had better study some new enterprise very carefully today before you put it in operation, and then you can get much accomplished.

LIBRA: (September 23 to October 22) Early in the morning today handle your obligations well since later this evening new interests may come to your attention which could be very beneficial.

SCORPIO: (October 23 to November 21) Plan how to come to a better understanding with an overly sensitive individual and then you can get much accomplished on a new project.

SAGITTARIUS: (November 22 to December 21) If you try a new method where your career activities are concerned you get beneficial results, then later today you can be with good friends.

CAPRICORN: (December 22 to January 20) Listening carefully to a mate's ideas today will make it possible to get your environment improved and beautiful. Be cooperative.

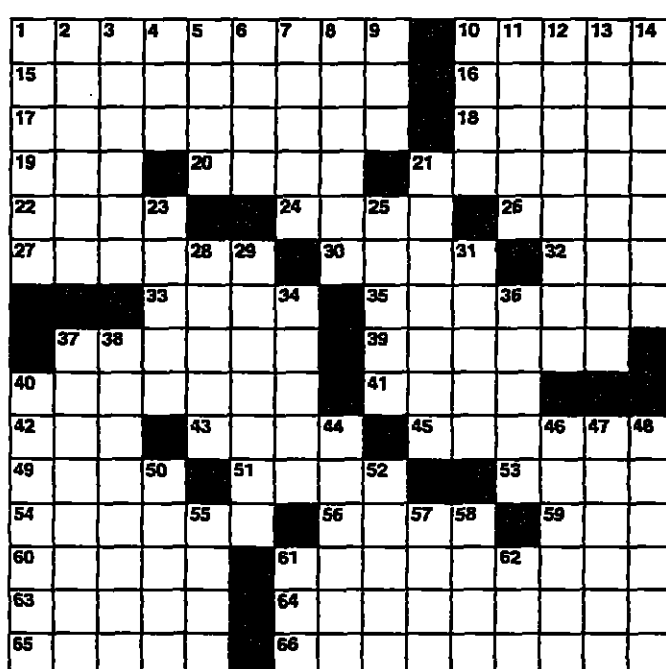
AQUARIUS: (January 21 to February 19) Take the bull by the horns and clear up that long-standing situation at home, then later today be off to amusements you like with close friends and loved ones.

PISCES: (February 20 to March 20) Get the right solution for continual difficulties at this time. Find the best way to please your partner before you do any entertaining.

Birthstone of February: Amethyst — Onyx

THE Daily Crossword by James E. Hinshel

- ACROSS**
- 1 LA member
 - 10 Bouquet flowers
 - 15 Scotland
 - 16 Teed off
 - 17 Correct positioning
 - 18 Soprano Yma
 - 19 Stout
 - 20 Chalice veils
 - 21 Composer Kern
 - 22 Sale condition words
 - 24 Strewn, in heraldry
 - 26 Roman poet
 - 27 "Bridget Loves" (TV sitcom)
 - 30 Be brave
 - 32 Sue — Langdon
 - 33 Connectives
 - 35 "Pierce" (Crawford film)
 - 37 "— or leave it"
 - 39 Entry
 - 40 Peters of opera
 - 41 Leg part
 - 42 Comic Philips
 - 43 Australian composer
 - 45 Folk singer
 - 49 Publicize
 - 51 Nolan of baseball
 - 53 So — (amen)
 - 54 Rodzinski and Rubinstein
 - 56 Inlets
 - 59 Punta — Este
 - 60 Pappas
 - 61 Last czarina of Russia
 - 63 Adored
 - 64 Winter months
 - 65 Edberg or Ekberg
 - 66 Suspect something's amiss
- DOWN**
- 1 Beetle
 - 2 Author of "Honor Thy Father"
 - 3 Cure-all
 - 4 Plant: abbr.
 - 5 Author Ferber
 - 6 Cupola
 - 7 Doozies
 - 8 Washed lightly
 - 9 Nosh
 - 10 Ascend
 - 11 City in Bolivia
 - 12 Urns
 - 13 Summer dress fabrics
 - 14 Withdrew
 - 21 Joshua's battle site
 - 23 Ophidian
 - 25 Household members
 - 28 Like xenon
 - 29 Newspaper VIPs
 - 31 Rodrigo Diaz de Bivar
 - 34 Actor Keach
 - 36 Star of Cygnus
 - 38 "All —" (film)
 - 40 Sells
 - 44 Part of NYC
 - 46 Hay machine
 - 47 — del Fuego
 - 48 Finally
 - 50 Adjusted, as a piano
 - 52 Family circle member
 - 55 Counsel
 - 57 Skaling jump
 - 58 Johnson or Morse: abbr.
 - 61 Paid notices
 - 62 Cagers' gp.



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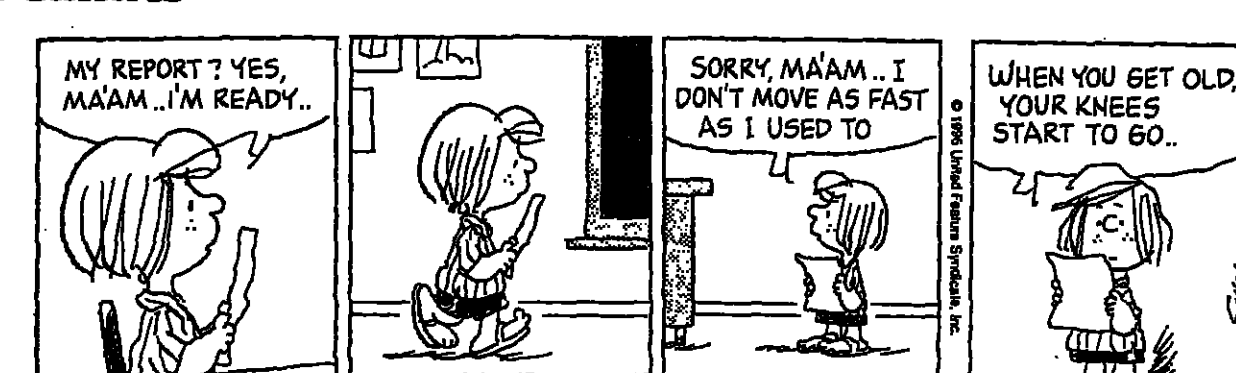
Thursday's puzzle solved

GLAD APPLE OWED
IONA BRIAR GALA
GONZO JOURNALIST
STEPPENS RELEE
ACE FOND
BASALT RULE SEE
RIND GAZES MAD
AMOSALONZOSTAGG
SEW LEAKY ELLE
HEY KITS SCALED
PASS APR
ADEAL APIARIES
BEDTIMEFORBONZO
AMES BLARE OKRA
TONY AORTA TSAR

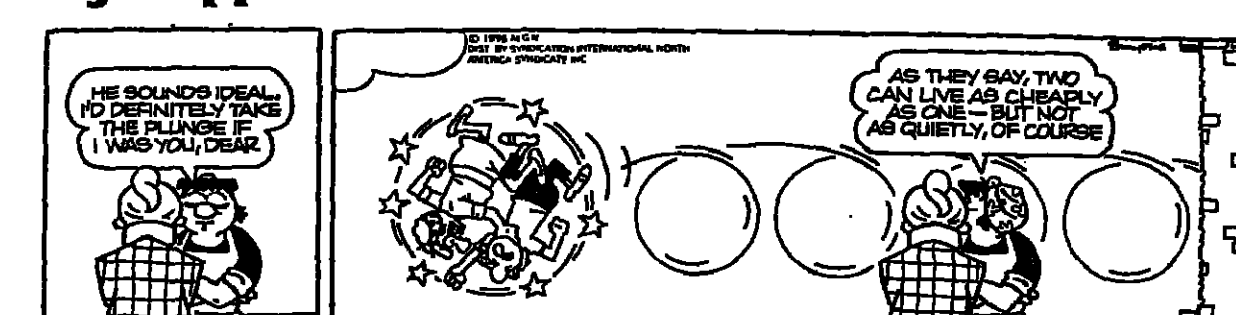
THE BETTER HALF. By Glasbergen



Peanuts



Andy Capp



Mutt'n'Jeff



JORDAN TIMES TEL. 699634/684311

February 10, 1996
Business & Finance
AFM dealers expect fluctuations to be slight for several weeks
AMMAN — Trading and prices continued to edge up at the Amman stock market ahead of the launching of direct exports and transport links with Israel expected to give a boost to the local industry, brokers said Friday.
They said positive factors influencing the market included strong signs that the Palestinian self-rule authority in the West Bank and Gaza was moving to increase its imports of Jordanian products, another element that also helped offset expectations that a cut in trade with Iraq was going to affect the local industry.
However, a crunch on liquidity brought about by higher yields of commercial bank deposits was adversely affecting the market, restraining trading volume as well as prices, said the dealers, who cannot be identified under standing guidelines.
The weekly report of the Amman Financial Market (AFM) said turnover for the week ending Thursday was JD5.7 million, up 19.4 per cent from the previous week's JD4.8 million.
The report said 1.8 million stocks changed hands under 2,492 contracts concluded during the week, with a daily trading average of 200,000 shares compared with JD600,000 last week.
The official AFM index, which is based on 60 of the 120 companies listed in the bourse, closed at 155.1 points after gaining 0.6 points or 0.4 per cent during the week.
Separate sectoral indices showed that commercial banks and financial institutions gained 0.5 per cent during the week and industrial shares dipped by 0.1 per cent and insurance by 0.4 per cent.
Industrial accounts for JD1.6 million of the weekly volume, followed by commercial banks and financial institutions with JD1.5 million, services sector firms with JD850,000 and insurance with JD80,000.
Shares of 86 companies were involved in the week's trading. As business closed, 38 of them showed gains, 30 had dipped and 19 remained unchanged.
AFM dealers said they expected fluctuations in the market to be slight for several weeks to come, pointing out that the Central Bank of Jordan was issuing JD15 million worth of three- and six-month certificates of deposits (CDs) at 9.25 and 9.5 per cent interest rates respectively.
"The CDs are going to draw some capital away from the market, and this would reflect badly on prices, which are otherwise expected to gain after annual figures released by several companies," said a broker. "But the situation would correct itself if there was to be any sign of major foreign capital coming into the market."
That was a reference to reports that dozens of foreign companies, which have secured approval to trade at the AFM, would soon be in the market. However, market observers said the focus of foreign firms will be mainly on the dozen or so blue chips in the Jordanian stock market.
Pearl Consulting, a local financial management and accounting firm, said recently that the two main factors that depressed prices at the AFM in January were the increase in local interest rates and the low volume of foreign investment in the market.
Pearl Consulting, which maintains its own market index, said industrial shares at the end of January at 152.72 points, down 17.08 per cent from the index base as of Dec. 21, 1994.
According to the Pearl index, services sector firms declined by 2.62 per cent, banks by 2.15 per cent and insurance by 0.33 per cent.

AFM dealers expect fluctuations to be slight for several weeks

By a Jordan Times Staff Reporter
AMMAN — Trading and prices continued to edge up at the Amman stock market ahead of the launching of direct exports and transport links with Israel expected to give a boost to the local industry, brokers said Friday.

LONDON EXCHANGE RATES		
LONDON (R) — Following are the buying and selling rates for leading world currencies and gold against the dollar on the London foreign exchange and bullion markets Friday.		
One U.S. dollar	1.3738/48	Canadian dollar
	1.4764/74	Deutsche mark
	1.6536/46	Dutch guilder
	1.2000/10	Swiss franc
	30.36/40	Belgian franc
	5.0725/75	French franc
	166.67/71	Italian lire
	100.88/94	Japanese yen
	6.9681/91	Swedish crown
	6.4481/91	Norwegian crown
	5.7122/22	Danish crown
	1.4169/79	Singapore dollar
	0.7555/65	Australian dollar
	7.7310/20	Hong Kong dollar
One sterling	\$1.5312/22	
One ounce of gold	\$347.84/86	

AMMAN FINANCIAL MARKET
WEEKLY REPORT
ORGANIZED MARKET TRADING ACTIVITY FOR THE PERIOD (02/02/1996 - 07/02/1996)
WEEKLY REPORT

COMPANY'S NAME	TRADING VOLUME	PREV. CLOSING PRICE	OPENING PRICE	CLOSING PRICE
AMMAN BANK PLC	680,980	233.500	233.500	233.500
JORDAN NATIONAL BANK	77,450	4.400	4.400	4.390
CALING ARABIAN BANK	9,970	4.500	4.500	4.500
BANK OF JORDAN	13,484	3.550	3.550	3.550
MIDDLE EAST INVESTMENT BANK	47,162	1.180	1.180	1.180
INDUSTRIAL DEVELOPMENT BANK	12,017	2.600	2.600	2.670
INDUSTRIAL DEVELOPMENT BANK/JEM	4,742	2.580	2.580	2.550
THE HAWKING BANK	58,525	5.090	5.090	5.000
JORDAN EMBASSY BANK	9,120	2.750	2.750	2.750
JORDAN TRUST BANK	251,624	1.070	1.070	1.040
AMMAN JORDAN INVESTMENT BANK	124,524	1.900	1.900	1.820
JORDAN ISLAMIC BANK	149,772	1.700	1.700	1.810
JORDAN INVESTMENT & FINANCE BANK	3,020	1.540	1.540	1.520
BEST BANK INVESTMENT FOR HOUSING	7,078	1.100	1.100	1.100
AMMAN BANK FOR INVESTMENT	30,802	0.840	0.840	0.840
AMMAN BANKING CORPORATION/JORDAN	5,477	5.230	5.230	5.230
PHILADELPHIA INVESTMENT BANK	70,367	1.200	1.200	1.200
BANKS SECTOR				
	159,016	INDEX NUMBER: 187.01		
		CHANGE: +0.477		
UNITED INSURANCE	9,11	2.500	2.500	2.500
ARABIAN REAL INSURANCE	25,628	1.800	1.800	1.720
JORDAN PRIME INSURANCE	2,519	2.800	2.800	2.780
JORDAN LIFE INSURANCE	316	2.750	2.750	2.750
INSURANCE SECTOR				
	29,472	INDEX NUMBER: 129.17		
		CHANGE: +0.277		
JORDANIAN ELECTRIC POWER	273,757	1.700	1.700	1.740
JEM DISTRICT ELECTRICITY	1,049	1.350	1.350	1.420
VEHICLES OWNERS FEDERATION	1,722	6.700	6.700	6.700
AMMAN INTERNATIONAL HOTELS	2,070	5.400	5.400	5.450
JORDAN NATIONAL SHIPPING LINE	5,481	2.580	2.580	2.650
NATIONAL PORTFOLIO SECURITIES	2,134	1.340	1.340	1.370
REAL ESTATE INVESTMENT	3,848	0.960	0.960	0.970
JORDAN INTERNATIONAL TRADING CENTER	2,670	1.000	1.000	1.010
MACHINERY TOOLS, REPAIRING & MAINTENANCE	5,303	0.720	0.720	0.780
UNITED HOTEL EAST & COMMERCIAL HOTELS	9,408	2.120	2.120	2.150
AMAS ENTER. FOR INVESTMENT & EDUCATION	54,724	3.480	3.480	3.450
SARFA VOLUNTARY TRUSTEES	19,019	1.160	1.160	1.170
UNITED CO. FOR ORGANIZING LAND TRANS.	144,155	2.200	2.200	2.200
UNION LAND DEVELOPMENT CO.	3,414	0.930	0.930	0.940
SERVICES SECTOR				
	429,552	INDEX NUMBER: 129.92		
		CHANGE: +0.044		

AMMAN FINANCIAL MARKET
WEEKLY REPORT
ORGANIZED MARKET TRADING ACTIVITY FOR THE PERIOD (02/02/1996 - 07/02/1996)
WEEKLY REPORT

COMPANY'S NAME	TRADING VOLUME	PREV. CLOSING PRICE	OPENING PRICE	CLOSING PRICE
AMMAN BANK PLC	680,980	233.500	233.500	233.500
JORDAN NATIONAL BANK	77,450	4.400	4.400	4.390
CALING ARABIAN BANK	9,970	4.500	4.500	4.500
BANK OF JORDAN	13,484	3.550	3.550	3.550
MIDDLE EAST INVESTMENT BANK	47,162	1.180	1.180	1.180
INDUSTRIAL DEVELOPMENT BANK	12,017	2.600	2.600	2.670
INDUSTRIAL DEVELOPMENT BANK/JEM	4,742	2.580	2.580	2.550
THE HAWKING BANK	58,525	5.090	5.090	5.000
JORDAN EMBASSY BANK	9,120	2.750	2.750	2.750
JORDAN TRUST BANK	251,624	1.070	1.070	1.040
AMMAN JORDAN INVESTMENT BANK	124,524	1.900	1.900	1.820
JORDAN ISLAMIC BANK	149,772	1.700	1.700	1.810
JORDAN INVESTMENT & FINANCE BANK	3,020	1.540	1.540	1.520
BEST BANK INVESTMENT FOR HOUSING	7,078	1.100	1.100	1.100
AMMAN BANK FOR INVESTMENT	30,802	0.840	0.840	0.840
AMMAN BANKING CORPORATION/JORDAN	5,477	5.230	5.230	5.230
PHILADELPHIA INVESTMENT BANK	70,367	1.200	1.200	1.200
BANKS SECTOR				
	159,016	INDEX NUMBER: 187.01		
		CHANGE: +0.477		
UNITED INSURANCE	9,11	2.500	2.500	2.500
ARABIAN REAL INSURANCE	25,628	1.800	1.800	1.720
JORDAN PRIME INSURANCE	2,519	2.800	2.800	2.780
JORDAN LIFE INSURANCE	316	2.750	2.750	2.750
INSURANCE SECTOR				
	29,472	INDEX NUMBER: 129.17		
		CHANGE: +0.277		
JORDANIAN ELECTRIC POWER	273,757	1.700	1.700	1.740
JEM DISTRICT ELECTRICITY	1,049	1.350	1.350	1.420
VEHICLES OWNERS FEDERATION	1,722	6.700	6.700	6.700
AMMAN INTERNATIONAL HOTELS	2,070	5.400	5.400	5.450
JORDAN NATIONAL SHIPPING LINE	5,481	2.580	2.580	2.650
NATIONAL PORTFOLIO SECURITIES	2,134	1.340	1.340	1.370
REAL ESTATE INVESTMENT	3,848	0.960	0.960	0.970
JORDAN INTERNATIONAL TRADING CENTER	2,670	1.000	1.000	1.010
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SERVICES SECTOR				
	429,552	INDEX NUMBER: 129.92		
		CHANGE: +0.044		

BUSINESS NEWS

A review of news from the Arabic press

Another shipment of fish unfit for human consumption

AMMAN'S SUPPLY Directorate has seized 12 tonnes of fish unfit for human consumption as it had an expiry date of Nov. 15, 1995. The fish, which was found in a refrigerated truck coming from a neighbouring country was confiscated and the vehicle's owners as well as other people were held for interrogation (Al Aswaq).

Chicken prices going up

PRICES OF chicken are rising due to low supply and high demand, with a kilogramme being sold between 1,600 to 1,700 fils. Many poultry farmers are preferring to sell their poultry to small chicken shops rather than slaughterhouses to get better profit (Al Aswaq).

Authorities reopen 14 coffee shops but decide to close two again

AUTHORITIES have decided to reopen the 14 coffee shops, which were previously ordered closed, after their owners submitted financial bonds to guarantee against any illegal activities at their coffee shops during the month of Ramadan. The authorities maintained their inspection and found out that two coffee shops were not abiding by the rules and, as such, were closed for a second time (Al Dustour).

Qteishat expects cabinet to raise water charges in coming few weeks

QUSAI QTEISHAT, secretary-general of the Ministry of Water and Irrigation, expects the Council of Ministers to issue a ruling over the coming few weeks to raise water charges. He said the category that will be affected by the increase will be those who consume more than 40 cubic metres per quarter and, as such, more than two-thirds of the subscribers will not be affected by this decision. Mr. Qteishat said that the change in charges will be about 13 per cent.

Filling pressures cause gas leaks

GAS LEAKS from cylinders are due from filling pressure as there are some minor "mistakes" which are within a normal percentage permissible under international specifications, according to Mohammad Al Qaisi, head of the association of distributors of gas and fuel. He explained that filling pressure was due to the daily filling process as between 60,000 to 70,000 gas cylinders are filled every day. Mr. Qaisi assured the public that gas cylinders are available in sufficient quantities, noting that imports of cylinders were continuing. He said more than 50,000 gas cylinders were imported recently and that the price for replacing a cylinder was unchanged at JD 2 (Al Dustour).

Jordanian shipping company making arrangements to benefit from cheaper transport to Israeli ports

JORDAN NATIONAL Shipping Lines Company General-Manager Yaser Al Tal has revealed that contacts are under way between Jordan and Israel to benefit from the Ashdod and Haifa ports in exporting and importing products from and to Jordan. Mr. Tal said his company was in constant contact with the Israeli authorities to come up with a specific mechanism through which Jordanian traders can start importing and exporting goods from Ashdod and Haifa. He pointed out that the average cost of transporting a container from Europe to Israeli ports is \$600 compared to \$1,600 to Aqaba port due to high Suez Canal crossing fees. Noting that shipping costs would be reduced by a large percentage, Mr. Tal emphasized that his company has prepared a tight strategy to prevent any negative effect on Aqaba as a result of shifting the import/export operations to the Israeli ports. Mr. Tal explained that the strategy envisages concentrating more on bulk transport so as Aqaba would be the only port in the Middle East in this specialty (Al Dustour).

JORDAN MARKETPLACE

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JORDAN MARKET PLACE

Financial Markets

Jordan Times

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Bureaucratic Interest Rates

Date: 8/2/1996

Currency	1 MYR	3 MYR	6 MYR	12 MYR
U.S. Dollar	5.86	5.80	4.87	4.75
Sterling Pound	6.00	5.93	5.87	5.87
Deutsche Mark	3.06	3.00	3.00	3.00
Swiss Franc	1.37	1.45	1.56	1.75
French Franc	3.75	3.81	3.87	3.93
Japanese Yen	0.75	0.37	0.37	0.43
European Currency Unit	4.56	4.52	4.43	4.43

Interest rate for deposit (U.S. Dollar 1,000,000 or equivalent)

Previous Month

Date: 8/2/1996

Metal	USD/0.1	JDM/0.1	Metal	USD/0.1	JDM/0.1
Gold	408.25	8.15	Silver	5.49	0.100

* 21 Karat

Central Bank of Jordan Exchange Rate Bulletin

Date: 8/2/1996

Currency	Bid	Offer
U.S. Dollar	0.7010	0.7160
Sterling Pound	1.0550	1.0910
Deutsche Mark	0.4776	0.4800
Swiss Franc	0.5841	0.5876
French Franc	0.1391	0.1398
Japanese Yen	0.0070	0.0073
Dutch Guilder	0.4765	0.4864
Swedish Krona	*****	*****
Italian Lira	0.0049	0.0051
Belgian Franc	*****	*****

* Per 100

Other Currencies

Date: 8/2/1996

Currency	Bid	Offer
Bahraini Dinar	1.8620	1.8780
Lebanese Lira	0.04436	0.04475
Saudi Riyal	0.1870	0.1895
Kuwaiti Dinar	2.3070	2.3670
United Arab Emirates Dirham	2.1332	0.1945
Egyptian Pound	0.2000	0.2100
Omani Riyal	1.8350	1.8410
UAE Dirham	0.1922	0.1933
Greek Drachma	0.2775	0.3045
Cypriot Pound	1.4315	1.5365

* Per 1000

Rigors of NBA do not deter Olajuwon from Ramadan fast

HOUSTON (AP) — He speaks of duty, of focus, of doing everything for the pleasure of God. It is clear that Hakeem Olajuwon has more than basketball on his mind these days.

The National Basketball Association star has given increased visibility to Islam with his decision to fast during Ramadan, the Muslim holy month.

"All this now is sports, it's worldly," Olajuwon says, pointing to the court from a seat in the auditorium away from the lights and attention.

He is about to speak of another world, a world a faith where serving God is more important than an NBA championship ring.

Ramadan, which began on Jan. 21 or 22 with the sighting of the new moon, celebrates the month in which God revealed the Koran, Islam's holy book, to the prophet Mohammed. Muslims are forbidden to eat or drink between sunrise and sunset during the holy month.

On a typical day, Olajuwon gets up at 5 a.m. For breakfast, then does not eat again until a light meal after sundown. He will have his main meal after the game. During the course of the month, he will lose 10 pounds.

It is a special sacrifice for a professional basketball player, who must face off in a battle of strength and desire against other superbly conditioned athletes each game.

No one takes more pounding than an all-star center constantly jockeying for position among other 250- to 300-pound athletes. Islamic law gives Olajuwon an out — since travelers are not required to fast — but he has not taken it.

Olajuwon said the option was meant for ancient times when travel meant the hardship of riding a camel over difficult terrain. That does not compare with an NBA player's life on an airplane.

Besides, he says, his game has never been better. "I feel much better. I feel lighter, faster, much more mentally focused," Olajuwon said. "When God



Hakeem Olajuwon of the Houston Rockets

prescribes something, it is for your best interest."

He also realizes that in a nation where Islam still struggles for acceptance, his visibility as one of the NBA's leading players gives him a certain responsibility.

"My role is very important because Islam has been misunderstood, especially in America," where people often associate the religion with terrorism, he said.

"You have to educate the people," he said. "Islam is a religion of peace... Submission and obedience to the will of God."

Muslims must demonstrate the beauty of Islam. "These are God-conscious people. They are dignified. They honour their word," he said. "The quality of a believer should reflect in their character."

If sportswriters have sometimes questioned the effect of the fast after a superb performance, Olajuwon's teammates are supportive.

Clyde Drexler said the other Rockets understand that the fast is "an act of faith for their character."

"I respect anyone that actually lives their faith... That's not a hypocrite."

Drexler said. It is not his team. Muslims in America or any person that is at the heart of his fast.

"Your main purpose in doing everything is for the pleasure of God, to please God regardless of what other people think," he said.

Like the Prophet Mohammed, Olajuwon plans to extend his fast to Mondays and Thursdays through the rest of the year.

It was something he has done off and on before, Olajuwon said, but has not decided to make a commitment to it.

Don't feel sorry for the big guy. Not only does it improve his game, but a smaller stomach means less back pain. And the fast helps clean his system of impurities, he said.

"Your whole body goes through a change. It's like rebirth," Olajuwon said. So the continuation of his fast should not be reassuring to opponents looking for any advantage in the playoffs as Olajuwon attempts to lead his team to a third straight championship.

"It's only my knew," he said, "they would be fast."

ABC, ESPN to televise '98 World Cup in U.S.

NEW YORK (AP) — ABC Sports and the ESPN Sports cable network have reached an agreement with world football's governing body FIFA to televise the 1998 World Cup from France.

ABC, ESPN and ESPN-2 will combine to show all 64 matches in the United States. ABC will broadcast at least 14 matches with ESPN and ESPN-2 showing about 25 matches apiece.

ABC and ESPN also televised the 1994 World Cup held in the United States.

They will again modify their usual commercial format, with no advertisements interrupting the matches.

China hints at possible Atlanta boycott

BEIJING (R) — China warned on Friday that a U.S. invitation to senior Taiwan officials to attend the 1996 Atlanta Olympic Games would draw a "strong response" from Beijing — but it stopped short of explicitly threatening a boycott.

Taipei Olympic Committee officials were welcome to attend the Games but an invitation to senior government officials of Taiwan, which Beijing regards as a rebel province, was not acceptable, a spokesman for the state physical culture and sports commission said.

"The Taipei Olympic Committee is a member of the International Olympic Committee," he told Reuters. "Of course they can attend the 1996 Olympic Games in Atlanta as an area delegation."

"What we are against is senior Taiwan officials trying to use the games for political purposes," he said.

"If the U.S. government allows top Taiwan officials to go to the Atlanta Olympic Games, China will make a strong response."

He declined to say what that response might be.

Sports Commission Minister Wu Shaozu, who also heads China's Olympic Committee, was quoted by a Japanese news agency as warning that if Taiwan officials went to Atlanta "things would be much worse" than China's near-boycott of the 1994 Asian Games in Hiroshima over the same issue.

In 1994 China prevented Taiwan President Lee Teng-Hui from attending the opening ceremony of the Asian Games in Hiroshima by threatening to boycott the event.

"If something similar happens in Atlanta, this will get worse than Hiroshima," Kyodo news agency quoted Wu as saying in Harbin in northeast China, where the Winter Asian Games are under way.

"China will react fiercely and sharply if something like this (Hiroshima) happens again. If it happens at the Atlanta Olympics, it will amount to interference in China's domestic affairs," Wu was quoted as saying.

In Australia, an International Olympic Committee official criticised China over its hints of a possible Atlanta boycott.

Phil Coles, an IOC member and director of international relations for the Australian Olympic Committee, told Reuters that China was

wrong to hint at boycotts after agreeing to compete in Atlanta.

"If the report is factual, then I'm against that sort of action," Coles said. "I'm sure it can be resolved without such threats."

Coles suggested China would leave itself open to unspecified future Olympic sanctions if it boycotted the games after already accepting its IOC invitation to compete.

"They've tried this sort of thing before. The difference is that China has already accepted its invitation to compete," Coles said.

"In the Olympics Taiwan competes under the flag of Chinese Taipei," Coles said. "As is the case with all countries who get to the Olympics, heads of state are going to visit the Games."

FIA announces expanded World Championship schedule

KARLSTAD, Sweden (AP) — Max Mosley, president of the International Motor Sports Federation, announced an expanded schedule of the World Rally Championship on Thursday.

This year's championship, which started Friday with the Swedish Rally, consists of nine rallies in Europe, Africa, Asia, South America and Australia.

"In 1997 we will have 14 events and that will then rise to 16, as we have in Formula One," Mosley said at a press conference also attended by the FIA Vice-president Bernie Ecclestone.

FIA also wants to include more compact events. "I think we have to move away from traditional rallying," Ecclestone said. "We have to make it more entertaining."

Defending world champion Colin McRae of Scotland, who didn't finish the Swedish

Rally last year, aims to become the first non-Nordic winner of the event.

The Swedish Rally has traditionally been dominated by Swedish and Finnish drivers. The first non-Nordic drivers entered for the first time only 10 years ago.

Now, all world champions who are still active will compete in the three-day rally. Among the others are Didier Auriol of France (Subaru), Juha Kankkunen of Finland (Toyota) and Stig Blomqvist of Sweden (Ford), who won the Swedish Rally a record seven times.

McRae's new Subaru teammate, Kenneth Eriksson of Sweden, won last year and is among the chief contenders again.

More than 300,000 fans are expected to see the rally, which is held over 1,677 kilometres of high-speed, snow-covered track in western Sweden.



FIA President Max Mosley (left) and FIA Vice-president Bernie Ecclestone speak at a press conference where Mosley announced a major expansion of the World Rally Championship. (Reuters photo)

FIBA wants to increase distance of 3-point shot

MUNICH (AP) — The international governing body of basketball wants to increase the distance of the 3-point shot to make it the same as the NBA standard.

FIBA, the international basketball federation, has proposed taking the 3-point shot line from 6.25 metres (20 feet 6 inches) to 6.70 metres (22 feet). That's the distance the National Basketball Association uses for its 3-point shot.

"It's another attempt to unify basketball rules worldwide," said FIBA spokesman Florian Wanninger Thursday.

The proposed changes were made at a meeting of the technical commission late last month at FIBA headquarters in Munich. The changes must be approved by FIBA's central board before its world congress in 1998.

Other proposed changes: "The game clock will be stopped after a valid field in the last minute of the game and during extra periods; the 30-second device will be reset when the ball strikes the ring on any shot for a field goal; a total of five time-outs will be permitted per game, two in the first half and three in the second; a three-man refereeing system will be permitted for any national federation wishing to use it, but all official FIBA games will continue with the two-man system."

Bennett makes splash at U.S. nationals

ORLANDO (AP) — With four weeks remaining before the Olympic swim trials, 15-year-old Brooke Bennett won her fourth U.S. National title at the Phillips 66 National Swimming Championships.

Bennett, who snapped Janet Evans' eight-year winning streak in the 800- and 1,500-metre freestyle last summer, won the 400-metre freestyle Thursday with a 4:12.66 over Suzu Chiba (4:13.52), Lauren Thies (4:14.24) and Jessica Foschi (4:14.59).

Bennett has now won six straight major national and international titles in the 400-metre freestyle beginning with the 1994 U.S. championships.

"I wanted to race for a national title," Bennett said. "I was ready to swim as soon

as I dove in the water. My goal time for the Olympic trials is not out of reach. I'm looking for a 4:08 or faster at trials."

Foschi, the fourth-place finisher, is the 15-year-old who is suing U.S. swimming authorities over a disputed drug test. She is now on probation and faces a possible two-year suspension.

Travelling with Bennett from Plant City, Florida, to Orlando was her new pet, a baby por-belly pig named Noelle. Bennett has an assortment of pets, including a donkey, a couple dogs, cats, birds and a horse.

Bennett shared the winner's stand with a cast of veterans and newcomers. Ron Karnaugh, 29, was the oldest winner of the night. The 1992 Olympian won the 200-metre

individual medley with his fastest time since the Barcelona Games, 2:03.13.

Seth Van Norder, 27, beat 1994 world champion, Hungarian Norbert Rozsa, 1:03.24 to 1:03.34. Angel Martino, 28, edged American record-holder Amy Van Dyken in the 50-metre freestyle, 25.45 to 25.71 to win her sixth U.S. National title.

Newcomers Shannon Cullen and Jilen Siroky won their first U.S. National titles. Cullen touched summer Sanders in the 200-metre individual medley 2:18.61 to 2:18.70 in the closest race of the night. Jilen Siroky earned the 100-metre breaststroke title with a 1:11.45.

"It's an emotional boost," Cullen said. "I'm not afraid of racing against the big kids anymore."

Wihdat score crucial win over Hussein

AMMAN (J.T.) — Titleholders Al Wihdat Marwan Shamali and Faisal Ibrahim scored Friday scored a crucial 2-1 win over Al for Al Wihdat before Aref Hussein scored his Hussein to take a 45-point lead atop the team's only goal.

The 21st week of the competition ends Saturday with Al Ahli-Baqaa match. The final they next have an easy match against Al week of the competition starts Tuesday and concludes the season Feb. 16.

Tomba sets his sights on Spanish gold

SIERRA NEVADA (R) — Alberto Tomba and Alpine skiing officials hope for a happy ending to their tales of World Championship woe when the event opens a year later than intended in southern Spain on Sunday.

Tomba, whose career has been a saga of Olympic triumph and World Championship torment, has made the conquest of Spanish gold his absolute priority after winning a remarkable 11 races and the overall World

Cup title last season.

As a measure of his obsession, the Italian admitted last month he had considered retiring at the peak of his success last season but did not do so because he wanted to be a world champion before locking up his racing skis for good.

"I'm aiming for the championships," the sport's biggest star declared before the season had even started.

His hope — were dashed last February when the lack of

snow here forced the International Ski Federation (FIS) to cancel the championships in Europe's southernmost ski resort, just a short drive from the palm trees, vines and fountains of Granada.

This time the FIS, still smarting from that fiasco and widespread media criticism in 1993 when high winds placed havoc with the last championships in Japan's Morioka, are hoping for untroubled racing to vindicate their choice of venue.

Chang to launch U.S. Davis defence

CARLSBAD, California (AP) — Australian Open runner-up Michael Chang returns to Davis Cup duty for the first time since 1990 when he opens the United States' bid to retain the trophy against Mexico's Leonardo Lavalle.

Chang, ranked fifth in the world and runner-up to Boris Becker in Australia, has played in three previous Davis Cup ties.

Martin, who is ranked 14th in the world, is making his sixth Davis Cup appearance for the Americans.

Patrick McEnroe and newcomer Patrick Galbraith will play doubles for the United States — the eighth doubles combination Tom Gullikson has used in as many matches as Davis Cup captain.

McEnroe will be appearing on his third Davis Cup team but Galbraith, who won the ATP Tour World Doubles Championship last November, will be making his debut in the competition.

Chang will open the tie against Lavalle and Martin

will go against Alejandro Hernandez. Hernandez was ranked 208th in the world and Lavalle finished 358th at the end of 1995.

Galbraith and McEnroe will face Oscar Ortiz and Luis Herrera in doubles Saturday and Chang will take on Hernandez and Martin will play Lavalle Sunday in the reverse singles.

Chang has a record of four wins against two defeats in Davis Cup play, including a dramatic victory over Austria's Horst Skoff in the 1990 semifinals in Vienna when he became the first player since Hall of Famer Don Dudge in 1937 to rally from two sets to love down to win a decisive match.

Martin was involved in two critical victories last year as the United States won the Davis Cup. He substituted for injured Andre Agassi and defeated Thomas Enqvist of Sweden to clinch the semifinals and he teamed with Pete Sampras for a key doubles victory over Russia in the finals.



Test driver Norberto Fontana of Argentina (left) and drivers Johnny Herbert of Great Britain (centre) and Heinz-Harald Frentzen of Germany (right) pose for photographers during the presentation of the new Formula One Red Bull C15 racing car of the Sauber-Ford team in Baden (Reuters photo)

Sauber-Ford unveil new F1 car

BADEN, Switzerland (AP) — Sauber-Ford's Johnny Herbert of Britain and Germany's Heinz-Harald Frentzen on Thursday unveiled the stable's radical new 10 cylinder Formula One hope for the 1996 championship here Thursday.

The new model is a radical departure on last year's with constructor Leo Ress saying that "all that's left of the old C14 is the suspension and the on-board camera."

The new car is powered by a Ford-Zetec-R V10 engine and has a Sauber/X-Trac gear-

box. Ford has doubled its budget for the coming season and has dropped the 8-cylinder format.

Herbert, who won two races last season to come fourth in the drivers' championship, now has his sights on beating double world champion Michael Schumacher of Germany this time round.

The 31-year-old English driver almost moved to IndyCar after being jettisoned by Benetton, before Sauber-Ford picked him to partner Frentzen.

GOREN BRIDGE

WITH OMAR SHARIF
A TAIWANI HSECH
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A DECISIVE HONOR

Both vulnerable. North deals.

	North	East	South	West
♠	A K J	A 4 3	A Q 8 5 2	A 10 9 8
♥	A K J	A 4 3	A Q 8 5 2	A 10 9 8
♦	A K J	A 4 3	A Q 8 5 2	A 10 9 8
♣	A K J	A 4 3	A Q 8 5 2	A 10 9 8

The bidding:

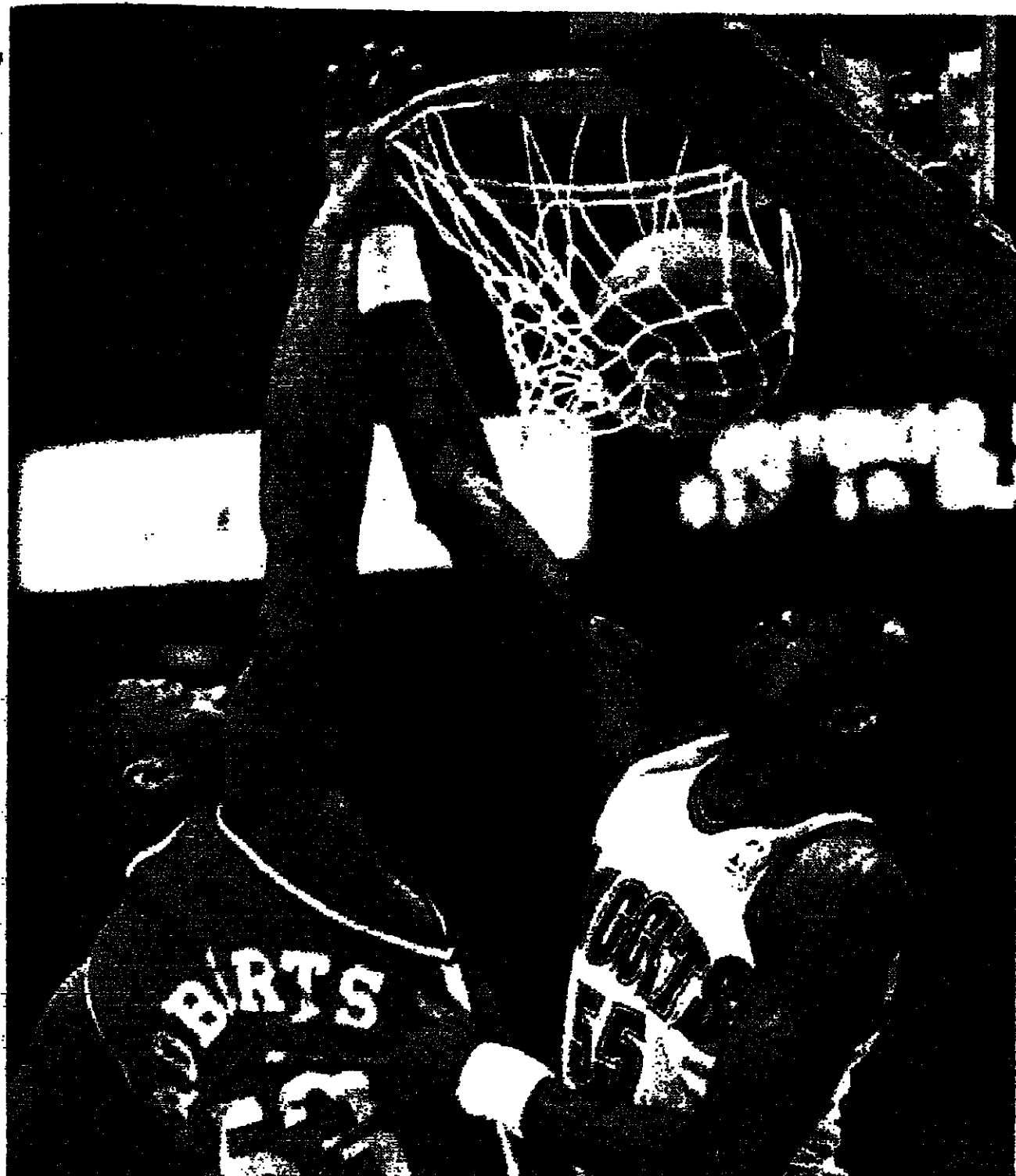
	North	East	South	West
1♠	1♠	1♠	1♠	1♠
2♠	2♠	2♠	2♠	2♠
3♠	3♠	3♠	3♠	3♠
4♠	4♠	4♠	4♠	4♠
5♠	5♠	5♠	5♠	5♠
6♠	6♠	6♠	6♠	6♠
7♠	7♠	7♠	7♠	7♠

lowed, declarer could afford to overtake and draw the last trump, discarding a heart from dummy. Now a low diamond was led.

When West followed low, declarer opted to insert dummy's eight. If the suit split 2-2, it made no difference what declarer played; if the suit were 3-1, East was twice as likely to have a high honor singleton than a bare jack. One hurdle was cleared when East won with the ace.

East found the only return to give declarer a problem — a low heart. Had declarer carelessly played low, West's seven would have forced dummy to win, and there would then have been no way for declarer to get off the board. No matter which red suit declarer chooses to lead the defenders would score two tricks in that suit and one or two in the other red suit for at least one trick set. However, declarer put up the ten. When that won, it was a simple matter to lead a diamond toward the queen and hold the losers to two diamonds and a heart.

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Los Angeles Clippers' Stanley Roberts (left) dunks over Denver Nuggets' Dikembe Mutombo during the first quarter of NBA play in Denver (Reuters photo)

Mavericks outlast Jazz in two OTs

DALLAS (AP) — Jason Kidd had 25 assists, the most in the NBA this season, and Jim Jackson scored 38 points as the Dallas Mavericks outlasted the Utah Jazz 136-133 in two overtimes Thursday night.

It was the second-highest scoring game of the season. Dallas was involved in the other one, too, 140-130 over Phoenix on Jan. 12.

Utah, which could've moved percentage points ahead of San Antonio in the Midwest Division, lost for only the second time in nine games. It was the first overtime of the year for the Jazz.

Karl Malone led Utah with 36 points and David Benoit tied his career-high with 24 points before fouling out in the fourth quarter. John Stockton had 28 points, 10 assists and one steal, leaving him seven shy of becoming the NBA's all-time steal leader. Jeff Hornacek scored 22 and Adam Keefe had 13 rebounds.

Dallas, playing in its NBA-high eighth overtime and forced into double OT for the second time this season, ended a three-game losing streak. George McClellan added 32 points after having a career-high 30 on Tuesday.

Suns 107, Nets 102: In Phoenix, Charles Barkley turned for his All-Star game start by getting 30 points and 18 rebounds and scoring his 20,000th career point as Phoenix beat New Jersey. Barkley also had two de-

fensive gems 60 seconds apart to augment his second straight strong performance. Two nights earlier, he had 35 points and 19 rebounds in a win over Chicago.

Michael Finley had 20 points and 10 rebounds for Phoenix, and Manning scored 14 before fouling out with 39 seconds to play.

Childs led the Nets with 22 points and Kendall Gill had 21. Armon Gilliam had 19 points and 13 rebounds, and Shawn Bradley had 20 points and 12 rebounds.

Nuggets 115, Clippers 95: In Denver, Mahmoud Abdul-Rauf scored 28 points to lead six Denver players in double figures as the Nuggets handed Los Angeles its eighth straight loss.

It was Denver's first win in four games against Los Angeles this year. The Clippers, whose last win was against Denver on Jan. 25, remain one victory away from matching last year's total of 17.

Dikembe Mutombo scored 18 points and grabbed 13 rebounds to move three away from 4,500. Don MacLean added 16 points, while Bryant Smith had 13. Jalen Rose 12 and Reggie Williams 10.

Loy Vaught scored 18 points to lead Los Angeles.

Hawks 98, Bulls 92: In Atlanta, Stacey Augmon scored 20 points and Steve Smith, redeeming himself for a poor shooting night, made a

key defensive play in the final minute as Atlanta defeated Washington.

Grant Long put the Hawks ahead for good, 88-85, when he banked in a 3-pointer with 4:27 remaining, but the Bulls had a chance after Tim Legler hit a 3-pointer with 1:08 to go to pull Washington to 94-92.

Long missed a 3-pointer with 24 seconds left and Calbert Cheaney grabbed the rebound for Washington. But Smith came in from behind and knocked the ball into the arms of teammate Mookie Blaylock, who was fouled and hit two free throws to send the Bulls to their sixth straight road loss.

Juan Howard led Washington with 21 points and Cheaney added 18.

Hornets 115, Kings 105: In Charlotte, North Carolina,

Glen Rice warmed up for the defense of his 3-point shooting title with 33 points, leading Charlotte over road-weary Sacramento.

Charlotte made its first five field-goal attempts, shot 69 per cent in the opening quarter and never trailed on the way to snapping a three-game losing streak.

Rice, who on Saturday will try to win his second consecutive long distance shootout title at All-Star weekend, connected on his first five shots and wound up making 11 of 16, including a 2-for-3 performance from 2-point range.

Mitch Richmond had 29 points for the Kings, who wound up 1-3 on their four-game, six-day road trip. The loss was the third in a row and seventh in nine games for Sacramento.

RESULTS

Atlanta	98	Washington	92
Charlotte	115	Sacramento	105
Dallas	136	Utah	133 (2nd OT)
Denver	115	LA Clippers	95
Phoenix	107	New Jersey	102

Wednesday's results

Jazz	102	Grizzlies	79
Bulls	99	Warriors	95
Rockets	110	Clippers	102
76ers	102	Pacers	101
Bucks	93	Raptors	88
Knicks	87	Bulls	82
Heat	101	Hawks	89
Pistons	97	Magic	83
T-Blazers	103	T-Wolves	93

Japanese television pays record price for Nagano Olympics

NAGANO (AFP) — Japan's major broadcasting networks have agreed a record \$37.5 million television deal for the 1998 Nagano Winter Olympics, organisers said Friday.

The deal was made by the International Olympic Committee (IOC) and Japan Consortium, consisting of the Japan Broadcasting Corp. (NHK) and other major commercial networks.

The sum is the highest price paid by Japanese broadcasters for any Winter Games and almost triple the amount paid for the Lillehammer Winter Olympic Games. They paid \$12.7 million for the 1994 event.

The IOC has sealed record deals with the U.S. network CBS for \$375 million, with the European Broadcasting Union for \$72 million and Canadian Broadcasting Corp. to pay \$16 million.

Deals with other networks are the highest for any Winter Olympics.

The Australian network Channel 7 has agreed to pay \$9.25 million, the South African Broadcasting Corp. \$1.25 million and the Organisation of the Television Lbero Americans contracted to pay \$985,000.

The \$511.985 million so far committed is up 45 per cent from the television fees paid for the Lillehammer Games.

The organising committee will receive 60 per cent of broadcasting fees and the IOC 30 per cent. The remaining 10 per cent will go to the national Olympic committee of the host country.

India trail in Davis Cup

JAIPUR (AFP) — Jacco Eltingh gave the Netherlands a 1-0 lead before rain disrupted play on the opening day of the Davis Cup World Group first round tie at the Jai Club grass courts here Friday.

Eltingh justified his surprise selection ahead of world number 11 Richard Krajicek by defeating India's main hope Leander Paes 6-4, 7-5, 6-4 in the first singles.

In the second singles, Jan Siemerink and India's Mahesh Bhupathy were tied at two-sets all when rain halted the encounter.

Bhupathy, ranked 321 places below world number 20 Siemerink, delighted home fans by taking the first two sets 6-4, 7-6 (7/4). But the experienced Dutchman clawed back into the match by winning the next two sets 6-4, 6-4.

Bhupathy was leading 3-2 in the fifth when the rain came. The match will be resumed on Saturday morning before the doubles featuring Paes and Bhupathy against the former world champions Eltingh and Paul Haarhuis.

Ahli manage 77-73 win to end Jazireh's ambitions

By Aileen Bannayan
Jordan Times Staff Reporter

AMMAN — The Kingdom's basketball champions Al Ahli cleared a tough hurdle Thursday night when they overcame Al Jazireh 77-73 in their first division match at the Sports Palace.

Over 300 fans were treated to an exciting game whose result rested on the final minute as Al Ahli rebounded from a 10 point deficit to avenge their first round loss to Al Jazireh.

Al Ahli now have to beat Al Orthodoxy in their season ending Feb. 15 clash to retain their fourth title. Since Al Ahli had won the first round game 90-76, Al Orthodoxy will have to win their upcoming clash to force a playoff.

Thursday night's match was one that Al Jazireh's relatively young lineup will find hard to forget.

The team will now finish third again after squandering the chance to move to second or even win the title.

Only a week ago they had led throughout their match against Al Orthodoxy but could not hold to their lead and lost the match 85-75.

After beating Al Ahli 76-73 in the first round and losing to Al Orthodoxy 72-66 earlier Al Jazireh had entered the race for the title by making the competition a three-way race and seriously disturbing their opponents plans.

While Al Jazireh's first round win over Al Ahli came as the latter seemed to be suffering from administrative differences, no one expected them to repeat that upset again.

Nevertheless, Al Ahli's players and coach were cautious and did not underestimate their foes.

Veteran Marwan Ma'touq netted three 3-pointers together with another one from Yousef Zaghloul as Al Ahli seemed to be taking things in control leading 22-10 in the 9th minute.

Marwan Saeedi then scored six consecutive points to lead 66-18 as Jazireh's Husam Lutfi (the match's top scorer with 21 points) scored for his team.

While Al Jazireh's scoring was held to a low average they successfully secured defensive rebounding by Ma'an Odeh who together with Lutfi and Yousef Abu Baker narrowed the gap to 28-26 in the final five



Naser Alawneh



Riyadh Ayesb

DURING THURSDAY night's Al Ahli Jazireh match fans could not help but notice the snags that disrupted the game. The main problem, which was present throughout the competition, was the fact electronic scoreboard stopped at least twice during the highly competitive game causing the match to stop for over five minutes as basketball officials tried to solve the matter. Eventually the scoreboard only showed the score but not the fouls registered on players and the team — an important factor for anyone seriously following up the game.

A second thing also apparent throughout the competition is the fact that most teams, officials and players continuously questioned calls by the referees. Although substandard refereeing has unfortunately become an inseparable part of the game, the referees themselves are also criticised for not taking decisive measures against most players and coaches.

These are some technical aspects of the competition which the basketball federation is faced with.

minutes of the half. Naser Alawneh, joining his teammates for the first time this season, did not disappoint his coach as he scored 10 of the next 14 points to outscore Al Ahli 14-9 and win the first half 40-37.

Al Ahli seemed disbelieving that they were again trailing Al Jazireh who had an explosive start to the second half with playmaker Saqer Khirfan scoring 4 three-pointers to take Al Jazireh's lead to 62-52.

As Al Ahli's Ramez Hammoudeh who was held to only 4 points in the first half was fouled out, teammate Riyadh Ayesb had his chance as he led his team with brilliant rebounding and 12 points that made the difference in this tight game.

Al Ahli altered their defence and taking advantage of their opponents' many fouls began to narrow the gap down from 66-58 to take the lead once again at 68-66 with four minutes remaining.

Two points by Saeedi gave Al Ahli a 70-67 lead.

STANDINGS

	P	W	L	SF	SA	Pts
Ahli	7	6	1	600	442	13
Orthodox	6	5	1	557	407	11
Jazireh	7	4	3	518	444	11
Jalil	7	2	5	376	455	9
Watani	7	-	7	406	609	7

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Batistuta leads Fiorentina against Parma

ROME (AP) — It's for the right to fight for the title. Fiorentina and AC Parma — the only two pursuers still in contention for a league championship that seems destined for AC Milan — face off Sunday's 21st round.

The clubs are tied for second place with 38 standings points, five fewer than Milan.

It's a big drop-off to fourth place, where Lazio of Rome and defending champ Juventus are in a virtual tie with 32.

The storied Turin side saw its hopes of a repeat vanish in the fog at Vicenza last round with a 2-1 loss.

With Milan running on all cylinders in search of its fourth title in five seasons, Sunday night's encounter is key.

And the key to the encounter should be Argentine striker Gabriel Batistuta vs. Parma's defence.

It's a classic confrontation: Fiorentina's attack is second in the 18-team league in goals scored (31) and Parma's defence is second in goals allowed (17).

Visiting Parma boasts a

backfield packed with internationals, from goalkeeper Luca Bucci to defenders Luigi Apolloni, Antonio Benarrivo, and Lorenzo Minotti. Portugal's Fernando Couto may miss the match with a back injury.

That unit must contain Batistuta, whose prolific scoring has helped the Fiorentina score in 31 consecutive home matches.

He's second in the league with 14 goals (Bari's Igor Protti has 13), and has helped Francesco Baiano revitalize a sagging career (eight goals). But Baiano is suspended, putting more pressure on Batistuta, whom Parma contained in a 3-0 rout in the fourth round.

Also important is the disqualification of Fiorentina coach Caludio Ranieri, who'll miss his team's next two matches and pay a million lire (\$630) fine for accusing a referee of impartiality. Ranieri termed the punishment "excessive."

Fiorentina is among Serie A's youngest clubs, and Ranieri's guidance has been

instrumental in its climb back to success after a trip to the second division just three years ago.

Neither Parma nor Fiorentina looked good last round against mediocre opposition, but playing the best tends to bring out these team's best.

The reigning UEFA Cup champ edged Sampdoria of Genoa 1-0 on an own-goal, while Fiorentina drew 0-0 with Cagliari.

Fiorentina remained undefeated in its last 10 matches, and Parma's streak reached five.

Those pale in comparison to Milan's run of 15 games without a loss, which should continue with Sunday's match at Atlanta of Bergamo.

Liberian striker George Weah's rousing return last round — he scored six minutes into a 3-1 win over Roma — bodes well for a team that's virtually perfect on defence: Milan has given up one goal in its last five matches.

Milan's roster is healthy, with the exception of striker

Roberto Baggio, who aggravated a right ankle injury Wednesday. He is expected to start Sunday.

Atlanta is in 12th, and is closer to the relegation zone (four points) than Milan is to the two second-place clubs.

The hosts lost their seventh of eight matches last round — a 2-0 defeat at Napoli — and their 7-4-9 record reflects the Roster's general mediocrity.

Atlanta striker Sandro Tosi will miss his third straight match with a sprained right knee, and Uruguayan midfielder Jose Herrera is out suspended.

Lazio is at 10th-place Udinese, while Juventus hosts 13th-place Cagliari.

Juve defenders Sergio Porrini, Moreno Torricelli, and Alessio Tacchinardi are out hurt. Rising star Alessandro Del Piero, a forward, turned his right ankle in practice Wednesday, but it's likely he'll play.

Other matches Sunday: Bari-Fiorenza; Inter Milan-Napoli; Padova-Vicenza; Roma-Cremonese; and Sampdoria-Torino.

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Bosnian Serbs talk tough on captives, but border is open

SARAJEVO (R) — Bosnian Serb authorities threatened to retaliate for the detention of Serb officers as the United States moved quickly to try to defuse a crisis jeopardising the Dayton peace process.

NATO said on Friday afternoon it had lost communications with top-level Bosnian Serb army leaders, a development which Lieutenant-General Sir Michael Walker, the NATO ground commander in Bosnia, termed "ominous."

Bosnian Serb military chief General Ratko Mladic had announced on Thursday he was breaking off all contact with NATO forces until Serbs held by the Bosnian government on suspicion of committing war crimes were released.

But, Serb civilians continued to cross the dividing lines with Muslim-Croat territory, despite Gen. Mladic's order, which included suspension of such journeys.

"The border will not be closed," Maksim Stanisic, mayor of Serb-held Sarajevo, told Reuters.

Serb authorities said on Thursday they would seize Muslims or Croats crossing into their territory unless the Bosnian government freed the Serb army officers, being held pending war crimes investigations.

"I will be compelled to call on our prosecution bodies to act in the same way towards

citizens of the Bosnia-Herzegovina federation who cross over to our territory," the Bosnian Serb "justice minister," Marko Arsovic said.

A key principle of the Dayton peace treaty is free movement across former front lines.

U.S. Secretary of State Warren Christopher ordered envoy Richard Holbrooke, architect of the Dayton deal, back to the Balkans for talks this weekend with key players as the peace process faced its most serious test since the treaty, agreed at a U.S. Air Force base near Dayton, Ohio, was signed in Paris by the warring parties in December.

State Department spokesman Nicholas Burns said Mr. Christopher's decision was "sending a strong signal to all the parties that we expect the Dayton accords to be implemented."

Gen. Mladic earlier ordered the suspension of all contacts with NATO until the two Serb officers and at least six soldiers detained by the Muslim-led government were released.

But, in another sign that the Serbs were unwilling to cut off all contacts, Mr. Stanisic said he would be willing to meet the international community's top civilian envoy Carl Bildt, or his deputy, Michael Steiner, in the mayor's office in Iliđa or at

the NATO-controlled airport in Sarajevo.

"We want to talk about all important issues," the mayor said. "Everything now is very dangerous. The peace process is like a ship being tossed on the sea."

One Serb civilian in Iliđa, a Serb suburb of the Bosnian capital, said of Gen. Mladic's ban on movement that he hoped people would continue to cross lines freely.

"During the war Mladic was god. But now he is not. There is a big question mark over him," he said, asking not to be named. Gen. Mladic has been accused of war crimes by the U.N.-appointed tribunal and NATO said on Thursday night it did not recognise Gen. Mladic's order to stop military contacts.

U.S. officials and NATO commanders said they expected the dispute would be resolved by the International War Crimes Tribunal, which has asked Bosnian authorities to hold the two officers until it decides whether to issue an indictment.

The Bosnian government says Gen. Djordje Djukic and Colonel Aleksa Krstovic, detained in unclear circumstances on Jan. 30, are suspected of killing civilians during the war.

Richard Goldstone, chief prosecutor of the Hague-based tribunal, said in Vienna he hoped a decision would

be made within days on whether to indict the two Serb officers.

As tribunal and government officials met in Sarajevo, Mr. Goldstone declined to disclose details of the evidence against them to reporters, but said: "It was of sufficient gravity for us to investigate."

The dispute exposes a grey area in the peace treaty, which does not set out clear guidelines for the investigation and extradition of suspected war criminals.

The U.S. military's top officer, head of the Joint Chiefs of Staff General John Shalikashvili, said in Tuzla, northeastern Bosnia, on Friday that U.S. and NATO troops would react strongly to any threats to peacekeeping forces in Bosnia.

"Anyone who thinks they can threaten Implementation Force (IFOR) and consider that a minor issue is flat wrong," he added. "We will not hesitate to be very resolute with anyone who in fact threatens us."

Gen. Shalikashvili said after arriving to visit U.S. troops and meet commanders that Serb authorities had to comply with the peace accord signed in Dayton.

"They know they need to comply for their sake," he said before flying to Sarajevo later on Friday for talks with NATO military officers and Bosnian government leaders.



QUEEN ALIA REMEMBERED: His Majesty King Hussein, their Royal Highnesses Prince Abdullah and Prince Faisal and Royal Court clergymen on Friday pray at the tomb of Queen Alia. Friday marked the 19th anniversary of the tragic death of Queen Alia, who was killed in a helicopter crash while returning from an inspection visit to a hospital in Tafleh (Petra photo)

Taiwan detects China troop movements, but urges calm

TAIPEI (R) — Taiwan said on Friday that China has begun moving troops to a coastline facing the island, and a top security official appealed to people not to be angered by Beijing's war games.

In Beijing, France's Foreign Minister Herve de Charette said that meetings with President Jiang Zemin and other Chinese leaders had eased his fears of military conflict between the communist mainland and democratic Taiwan.

Taipei officials moved to calm people as China's widely-expected military exercises looked imminent. Nerves over the war games have hit business confidence here and helped to drive stock prices lower by nearly eight per cent this year.

"From yesterday there has been a gradual increase in the number of armed forces stationed along the mainland's southeast coast but there is no sign of mass troops gathering," said a Defence Ministry statement.

Hong Kong newspaper reports have said China is planning an exercise involving 400,000 troops and all branches of the armed forces to last a month along the coast of the southeastern province of Fujian.

China, which regards Taiwan as a renegade province, maintains a threat to attack this island if it drops a pledge to reunify and tries to become independent.

Analysts say that the aim of China's repeated war

games since last summer and its vitriolic criticisms of President Lee Teng-hui are aimed at reducing Lee's support in presidential elections on March 23.

Beijing fears the March elections, the first democratic presidential vote there, could be a prelude to a declaration of independence.

But moving to quell Taiwan's concerns, the island's top security official said that people who get angry over China's exercises would only be falling prey to a communist trick.

"Communist China's exercise is routine, and choosing to stage it before our presidential elections is meant to anger us, and is not related to attacking Taiwan. If people actually become angry, then we have fallen for communist China's trick," Yin Tsung-Wen, director of the National Security Bureau, said on state television.

In a clear expression of concern, all three major political parties decided to set up a committee to repair China relations which have fallen to their lowest point since the early 1980s. The committee will operate from Tuesday.

Separately, Taiwan's top negotiator with China urged Beijing to resume high-level talks scrapped last year in protest at President Lee's trip to the United States in June. China objects to any attempts by Taiwan to expand its foreign relations.

"As everyone knows not having channels (of com-

munication) is a very dangerous thing," Koo Chen-Fu, chairman of the semi-official Straits Exchange Foundation (SEF), said on state television.

"We sincerely wish that China will resume the talks," Mr. Koo said.

The United States, which has diplomatic relations with Beijing but is bound by treaty to supply weapons for Taipei's defence, has voiced concern over tensions in the Taiwan Strait.

But U.S. President Bill Clinton said this week he was confident that tensions would not explode into an armed clash because too many of China's own interests are at stake.

China warned on Friday that a U.S. invitation to senior Taiwan officials to attend the 1996 Atlanta Olympic Games would draw a "strong response" from Beijing — but it stopped short of explicitly threatening a boycott.

A spokesman for the state physical culture and sports commission said Taipei Olympic Committee officials were welcome to attend the games but any invitation to senior Taiwanese government officials was not acceptable.

France's de Charette on Friday reassured China that Paris had received no applications from French firms to sell missiles to Taiwan and would honour its 1994 pledge to make no new arms sales to the island.

Greece fires its military chief

ATHENS (Agencies) — Admiral Christos Limberis has been dismissed as chairman of the military's joint chiefs of staff for releasing confidential minutes of an emergency war council which took place when Greece was on the brink of war with neighbouring Turkey.

Adm. Limberis had refused to step down despite demands from Premier Costas Simitis.

A meeting of the socialist government's defence and foreign affairs council (Kysse) criticised Adm. Limberis for releasing the confidential minutes to the media in an apparent attempt to ward off criticism of the Greek military's handling of the crisis with Turkey last Wednesday.

Adm. Limberis released the minutes of his conversation with the premier amid recriminations over the military's inability to prevent Turkish commandos from landing on a remote rocky barren islet considered Greek which lies three miles off the Turkish coast. According to the transcript, Adm. Limberis had offered the premier military options for taking out the commandos which was rejected on the grounds that a major conflict would erupt between the two countries.

In London, the British Foreign Office angrily dismissed as "nonsense" a top U.S. diplomat's criticism of European leaders for failing to act to avert the clash between Greece and Turkey last week.

No government is in sight in Turkey

ANKARA (AFP) — Hopes of putting an end to Turkey's six-week political crisis dimmed Friday as the three main party leaders continued to squabble over who should head a new government.

Mesut Yilmaz, the latest politician asked to form a government, told a news conference he may give up the task early next week if talks with a pro-Islamic party do not produce a surprise result.

He has already seen a coalition offer with the centre-right True Path Party rebuffed, and was pessimistic on the prospects of an alliance with the Welfare Party of Necmettin Erbakan.

Mr. Yilmaz, head of the right-wing Motherland Party, said he would meet Mr. Erbakan for talks on Monday "to try to see if it is possible to form a coalition."

But he added: "After the legislative elections of Dec. 24, Mr. Erbakan demonstrated flexibility but the attitude he has shown recently is a diversion from that line."

"I don't have a lot of hope for Monday's meeting," he went on, and accused the Welfare leader of "having praised the Iranian Islamic revolution" of 1979 during a reception at the Iranian embassy in Ankara.

"For us, it is not possible to reconcile (ourselves) with a mentality that takes the Iranian revolution as its example... (Motherland) will not participate in a coalition that does not aim to protect the fundamental rights of the Republic of Turkey," he added.

He said he would meet his own party leaders later Monday and may surrender the mandate given to him by President Suleyman Demirel to form a government if the

party leadership thought a coalition was impossible.

His comments Friday appeared to harden his earlier statements, when he had seemed favourable to an alliance with Welfare after exhausting other means.

The crisis arose after December's legislative elections when Welfare topped the polls but without a sufficient majority in parliament to rule on its own.

It ended with 158 seats in the 550-seat assembly, ahead of True Path, led by caretaker Premier Tansu Ciller, with 135 and Motherland with 133.

Mr. Yilmaz met for talks Friday with Bulent Ecevit, leader of the Party of the Democratic Left, but it has only 75 seats, and, in order to have a majority in parliament, he needs the support of either True Path or Welfare.

Ms. Ciller and Mr. Erbakan have already tried separately to form a government, but all efforts have so far failed.

On Thursday, Mr. Yilmaz said talks with Ms. Ciller had collapsed and he was turning to Welfare so as "not to leave the country without a government."

"Ciller, with her endless ambition to remain prime minister, is the main obstacle to a Motherland-True Path coalition," he said.

It talks with Mr. Erbakan similarly failed, he added, "there is a possibility of fresh elections in June."

Mr. Demirel also hinted Wednesday at the possibility of general elections in the coming months, saying: "If parliament cannot produce a government, the Turkish people may produce another parliament."

Final results of PNA elections due today

GAZA CITY (Agencies) — Final results of the Palestinian general elections will be announced Saturday, three weeks after the historic vote was held, election officials said.

The Jan. 20 election has been overshadowed by complaints of cheating, including voter intimidation, tampering with ballot boxes and double-voting by Yasser Arafat's security forces.

International observers led by former U.S. President Jimmy Carter declared the elections were free and fair, despite some problems. But some Palestinian observers and candidates have complained that the visitors left before the count was completed.

Preliminary results indicated that Mr. Arafat won 88.1 per cent of the vote in the race for president of the Palestinian National Authority (PNA) and that members of his Fateh movement won at least 50 of 88 seats in the Palestinian legislative council.

Few disputed that Mr. Arafat won by an overwhelming margin against challenger Samiha Khalil, a 72-year-old social activist. However, dozens of candidates have filed complaints with the Central Election Commission concerning the council races.

The final results were to be announced Saturday evening in Gaza City by Mahmoud

Abbas, chairman of the Central Election Commission, said the panel's spokesman, Riyad Khodari.

Mr. Khodari said Friday that the announcement would be made even though an appeals court was to decide only Sunday whether a revote should be held in Ramallah, one of 16 electoral districts. The appeals court earlier had ordered a revote at two polling stations in the Gaza Strip because of cheating.

Mr. Khodari said the objections dealt with minor issues and were not expected to alter the outcome of the vote.

Two Palestinians jailed

The high security court here Thursday handed down heavy jail terms on two Palestinian militants for planning attacks on senior Palestinian officials, legal sources said.

Adel Al Khneif, 30, and Ayman Abu Libdeh, 25, were given respectively 10 and seven years in prison.

Both were arrested by Palestinian police 10 days ago after they entered the autonomous Gaza Strip from Libya via Egypt on false papers. They fled to Libya in 1990 because they were wanted by the Israeli army in connection with activities for the Black Panthers, a branch of armed militants notorious for killing suspected collaborators with Israel.

Rabin killer undergoes psychiatric examination

TEL AVIV (Agencies) — Yitzhak Rabin's confessed assassin was examined by three psychiatrists Friday to determine whether he was emotionally disturbed at the time of the killing.

Gunman Yigal Amir was examined for almost three hours, said prison authority spokesman Moshe Malul.

Defence attorney Shmuel Fishman said he would speak with the psychiatrists on Sunday and discuss their conclusions.

Amir, arrested immediately after he shot Mr. Rabin on Nov. 4 at a Tel Aviv peace rally, faces life plus 49 years in prison if convicted of murder and conspiracy.

The prison term could be reduced, however, if the defence proves Amir was emotionally disturbed when he pulled the trigger. Mr. Fishman has said he would probably make this argument in court.

The psychiatric evaluation was ordered last week by Tel Aviv District Court Judge Edmond Levy who said he wanted to make sure that Amir got a fair trial. Judge Levy did not suggest there were any signs that the defendant was insane.

ward and says: "I accuse you of murder."

"He's dead?" asks Yigal Amir. "Yes," answers police officer Moti Naphtali. "I can't believe it," Amir exclaims. Then, in a hushed tone, he adds: "I've done my job."

Amir's trial is to resume Feb. 15.

On Thursday, he was moved from his isolation ward at Ohalei Keidar prison near the southern town of Beersheva to the Sharon prison near Tel Aviv where the trial is taking place.

Until now, neither Amir nor his defence team have claimed that his judgement was in any way impaired during the shooting.

In the police videotape, Amir — apparently unaware of his success — is seen meeting briefly with Israel's police minister and police chief just after the shooting, and then being left alone with two interrogators.

He dictates a confession, saying he left home that day, Nov. 4, intending "to kill Rabin." Amir then corrects himself, however, saying: "Not to kill but to paralyse him politically."

Amir admitted shooting as the prime minister left a peace rally in Tel Aviv and headed towards his car. "He came down (a stairwell). I shot him with three bullets."

NEWS IN BRIEF

China to sign border treaty with neighbours

ALMATY (AFP) — China, Russia and three former Soviet Central Asian republics will sign a treaty in April to demilitarise parts of their common borders, it was announced Friday. Kazakhstan's Foreign Minister Kasymzhomart Tokayev said the treaty would be signed in Shanghai "just after April 20" by the presidents of China, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Russia and Tajikistan. "The treaty will aim to avert conflicts in border regions and create a 100-kilometre zone in which military manoeuvres will no longer take place," he told a press conference. Only border guards would be allowed into the zones, he added. Mr. Tokayev spoke after a two-day meeting of 15 countries to discuss the creation of an Asian counterpart to the Organisation for Security and Cooperation in Europe. Such an entity would serve to defuse tensions that might arise in the vast Asian land mass, including the Middle East and Central Asia, although officials said its founding was still a ways off.

Khamenei urges Iranians to rally around revolution

TEHRAN (AFP) — Paramount leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei urged the nation on Friday to actively support the 1979 Islamic revolution to counter threats from Iran's arch-enemy, the United States. Making a rare appearance to lead the weekly prayers at Tehran University, Ayatollah Khamenei accused Washington of seeking to "destroy" the Islamic republic or "force its leaders into servile compliance and reconciliation," and said: "The only way to prevent this is for our people to be actively present on the scene and support the revolution." The leader said the United States was "angry" with the Iranian revolution "because it has triggered Islamic reawakening throughout the world."

Baby sold for \$7,000 in Palestinian camp

BEIRUT (AFP) — Six people were arrested after a 14-month-old girl was sold for \$7,000 from a Palestinian refugee camp near the Lebanese capital, a newspaper said on Friday. According to Al Nahar daily, the girl, Nada, was offered by two women to a middleman for \$15,000. They also proposed a seven-day old baby for \$10,000. The baby-broker was accompanied by a doctor who examined the two babies. He offered \$7,000 for Nada, but refused the younger child, the newspaper said. Nada was then sold to another individual, Al Nahar said without giving further details. Six people were arrested for participating in the sale, the daily said, adding that police are to begin interviewing the suspects on Saturday.

Israel bars U.S. company from dumping toxins

TEL AVIV (AP) — Israel has rejected a proposal by U.S.-owned Haifa Chemicals to dump its toxic waste directly into the Mediterranean rather than a river feeding into the ocean, a spokesman for the environment ministry said Friday. Ministry officials will meet with the company's management and workers next week to see if they have other waste disposal plans, said ministry spokesman Itzhak Kramer. "If they don't have other options, there may be no other way but to close down the factory," he said. Haifa Chemicals used to discharge toxic effluents into the Kishon River which feeds into the Mediterranean. In line with an environment ministry plan to clean up the river, the company proposed to build a 2.2-kilometre pipeline that would channel the toxins directly into the sea, arguing that environmental damage would be minimal. However, a study submitted to the environment ministry showed that the pipeline would cause irreversible damage to the marine environment, Mr. Kramer said.

2 killed in New York train collision

SECAUCUS, New Jersey (AP) — Two commuter trains collided Friday morning near New York City, shearing off the side of one car, killing at least two people and injuring at least 100. One of the transit trains apparently jumped off the track and hit the front car of another train, transit agency spokesman Ken Miller said. Rescue efforts were complicated by the remote location. While it is less than eight kilometres from New York City, it is in a marshland, and the only access is by a series of dirt roads. Jersey City police said. The injured were being taken to hospitals in Secaucus and Newark.

Turkey police kill 3 suspects in house raid

ISTANBUL (AP) — Police killed three alleged members of a violent leftist group during a raid on a house in a middle-class suburb here on Friday. The suspects were members of the Revolutionary People's Salvation Party-Front (DHK-C), which claimed responsibility for the assassination of one of the country's most prominent businessmen and two associates in January, police said.

COLUMN

Radioactive kittens born at nuclear plant

LOS ANGELES (R) — A pregnant cat made it past armed guards, metal detectors and barbed wire fences to give birth to four kittens inside a southern California nuclear power plant, a plant spokesman said. The three-week-old kittens were discovered near a defunct unit of the San Onofre nuclear plant north of San Diego and given the names Alpha, Gamma, Beta and Neutron after tests showed they were too contaminated to be taken off the site. "They're acting and behaving like normal kittens — frisky," Clarence Brown of Southern California Edison Co. said.

Curtain up on a facelift at the Paris opera

PARIS (R) — Paris's 19th-century Opera Garnier, left in the shade since the birth of its futuristic sister at the Bastille in the 1980s, showed off a costly facelift and won the right to stage opera again. The Bastille Opera, built by late President Francois Mitterrand to mark the bicentenary of the 1789 French Revolution, had until now left only ballet and concerts to the ornate Belle Epoque landmark. Closed for the past 18 months for a 145-million franc (\$29 million) refurbishment, the domed monolith built by Charles Garnier in 1875 now boasts a cleaner, brighter auditorium and improved stage machinery.

Actress faces grilling in U.S. court case

NEW YORK (R) — Joan Collins took the witness stand in a court battle against Random House and wiped away tears after defending herself in a first round of tough questioning about manuscripts she submitted to the publishing giant. Outside the court, Collins told reporters she felt insulted by the line of questioning and said murderers had received better treatment in court than she had. "I was rather upset because I'm not used to being insulted like that," Collins said. "I've watched a lot of cases and I have not seen a murderer on the stand being talked to like that."

Crazed elephant gunned down in Thailand

BANGKOK (R) — A crazed jumbo elephant was shot dead with hundreds of bullets in southern Thailand Thursday after he went wild, killed his owner and ruined several houses, district officials said. Officials in Nopthitam province, about 700 kilometres south of Bangkok, sprayed the elephant with hundreds of rounds before finally killing it, one official said by telephone.

Australia premier offers toss of coin to settle dispute

CANBERRA (R) — Australian Prime Minister Paul Keating has offered a time-honoured, if unconventional, way to settle a dispute with opposition leader John Howard — the toss of a coin. Mr. Keating wants the first of two proposed debates ahead of March 2 elections to be conducted by the state-owned Australian Broadcasting Corp. But Mr. Howard insists it must be televised on the commercial Channel Nine network. "I propose that we toss a coin," said Mr. Keating. Mr. Howard has yet to respond.